The End

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Summary: It's all over for Simba, Nala and Haiba...

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: The Story So Far

AN: Here we are. After sixty-four stories, this is it. The final ever story of *The Lion King Adventures*. It's been such a long ride, hasn't it? Well, here you go. It's time for the greatest finale of them all. Deep breaths, everyone... Deep breaths.

The End

Chapter One: The Story So Far

Simba had seen many strange things in his life. Deadly wizards, insane cubs with electricity powers, slimy frogs who wanted to brainwash you… The list went on and on and on. Life really wasn't normal for him and his friends. It had never been normal. The circumstances surrounding his birth were even absurd: he had been lifted up by a monkey, for goodness' sake! His life had been nothing more than a rollicking ride of insanity, depression and adventure that just never seemed to end.

And it was only going to get weirder. *Much* weirder, in fact.

Simba stared in horror at the creature that had emerged from the pool of lava. He instantly seemed to forget the shocking events that had occurred prior to this. All he could think about was what was happening right now.

The past day had been the most eventful of the cubs' lives. It all started courtesy of the Interceptor, and—for once—not them. He had come into contact with a deadly creature known as Virusi. Well, he wasn't exactly a creature—to call him a *germ* would sound more appropriate. He was a living virus, and a deadly one at that. One flick of his elongated claw would boil your cells alive, reducing you to nothing more than dying flames. There was very little you could do to protect yourself from him. Only suffer and die.

The Interceptor encountered the virus—but not before finding the bloody corpse of one of his victims—and fought with him. Virusi explained to him his sinister plan: that he wanted Simba, Nala and Haiba all dead. He also wanted to find the Hermit of Hekima—a wise and magical golden eagle—for a purpose that wasn't quite clear to them until much later…

Managing to escape his evil clutches, the Interceptor burst into Jowai Resort—the cubs' temporary home after the destruction of the Pride Lands—and told them what he had found out.

The living virus himself eventually showed up, telling them that his "creator" had sent him in order to put his diabolical plan in motion. After a short fight with Virusi, the cubs and the Interceptor narrowly escaped, hoping that they could find the Hermit of Hekima before he could.

Sadly, Virusi had a better plan than just to chase the four of them through the jungle. Instead, he went straight to the Hermit of Hekima, stabbing right through his chest with his menacing claw and plucking out his soul. It took on the shape of a bright blue orb of glowing energy. The cubs had no idea what the living virus was planning on using it for…

Simba, Nala, Haiba and the Interceptor arrived at the Hermit of Hekima's home—a very tall cliff overlooking an enormous sparkling river—only to discover that he was dead. The golden eagle now resided at the bottom of the river, no longer having a soul to call his own. This left the cubs quite clueless as to what Virusi's plan actually was. It seemed incredibly confusing to them all—especially considering that they didn't know what the living virus had taken from the wise hermit.

Things became much more complicated, however. Prior to finding the deceased Hermit of Hekima, Haiba had let slip that he once encountered him a few days before. It wasn't until much later that Simba and Nala realised why…

"I killed Tama."

That was what Haiba had confessed to. It was the whole truth. Haiba had smashed her head over and over again into a rock, caving her skull in. It was a grisly death, and one that she didn't deserve. Haiba was left with so much guilt after the incident that he fled the jungle and returned home to the Grand Lands. While he had been gone, the entire pride had died of starvation, and only his mother, Amri, survived. Luckily, a mad scientist there had managed to convince him that his life really could be turned around, despite his actions. This resulted in Haiba returning to Jowai Resort, and eventually admitting to his crime a little while afterwards.

Simba was so angry—so furious—with Haiba that he instantly attacked him. As a result, Haiba was now scarred for life. Those three deep claw marks on his left cheek would constantly remind him of his despicable actions.

Luckily, Nala had managed to come between the two, and they agreed on a truce for the time being. Simba certainly didn't like it, however, and refused to let Haiba so much as even speak.

Regardless of the rising tension in the group, they continued on their mission, searching for the living virus in the hopes that they could destroy him before he completed his creator's plan.

Meanwhile, Virusi had arrived at the wreckage of the Pride Lands. All that remained was an enormous hole in the ground, which looked as though it travelled right down to the centre of the earth. However, the living virus used the soul that he had extracted from the Hermit of Hekima in order to bring the kingdom back to its original form. But he wasn't finished there…

Simba, Nala, Haiba and the Interceptor arrived at the Pride Lands, amazed to discover that the kingdom had been completely restored. They soon found, though, that a massive force field had been set up around the entire area, preventing them from getting inside.

Thanks to an idea from Haiba, the four of them travelled back into the jungle in order to look for Hago's staff. He thought that they could use the magic contained within the staff to break the force field that shrouded the kingdom. Unfortunately, thanks to a previous encounter with Hago—in which Tojo had sadly lost his life—the staff had been completely drained of magic. They still didn't know that the staff had taken on a mind of its own, and wanted to use Tojo to obtain a body. And they never would know. The secret had died with Tama…

Luckily, Haiba knew that the staff could be restored to original working order with the help of a magical entity known as the Roho. They had encountered the mysterious being once before, hoping that it would be able to use its powers to bring back the Pride Lands. Sadly, it could do nothing, as there was a powerful spell surrounding the kingdom. It did, however, manage to help them get rid of an arrogant cub known as Aibu…

Upon arriving at the Dark Caves where the Roho resided, they discovered that it was dying. Whoever Virusi's creator was, they were consuming just about every magical creature in sight. The Hermit of Hekima was the first to fall, and then the Roho perished soon after. It did manage to rejuvenate Hago's staff just before disappearing for ever, though.

Finally, Simba used the new magic in Hago's staff to burn up the invisible barrier that shrouded the Pride Lands. At long last, they were allowed entry into the kingdom that they rightfully deserved. Sadly, this effort by the staff had completely drained it of energy once more, and it crumbled to dust in Simba's paws. They were on their own from that point.

While they were trying to break in, Virusi had already reached Pride Rock. Digging his magma-like claw into the famous structure's surface, he turned everything around it into a fiery inferno. A bowl of magma began to form underneath Pride Rock; it was the birthplace of something terrible…

Arriving on the scene, Simba took action. He faced off against the living virus at the edge of Pride Rock, almost ending up being yet another victim of his menacing claw. Victoriously, he kicked Virusi into the pool of magma, killing him instantly.

Just as Simba was about to celebrate the ending of this nightmare, he was shocked by a sudden rumbling noise with shook the ground underneath his paws. The pool of lava was now more active than ever, swirling and bubbling at an unimaginably fast pace. It was too late for the cub to realise that Virusi's plan had succeeded, and that his creator was finally returning to the earth.

That was how Simba had gotten to this point.

"What the hell?" Simba exclaimed, bent over the edge of Pride Rock as he watched the creature emerge from the magma. His eyes widened in alarm. "You're… you're not Death!"

All of them had been under the impression that Death—one of their greatest enemies—had been behind this all along. After all, he had the motive. How can you kill something that's already dead? You can only send it away…

But, clearly, they were wrong.

The being that had emerged from the lava was not Death. In fact, it looked nothing like him at all.

He looked like a lion, with golden fur and a mane that was a very light shade of brown. His claws were long and jagged: perfect for killing any other animals. His eyes had a silvery shade to them; they almost looked like they were glowing…

"*Free!*" he cried, in a voice that sounded nothing like Death. It sounded even worse… It had the quality of pure evil. "*I am finally free! Free to enter this world!*"

The lion laughed triumphantly, forepaws held high in the air. Simba could only look on in bemusement. *So if it's not death,* he asked himself, *then who* is *it?*

"What the heck is going on?" Nala exclaimed, unable to comprehend what she was witnessing. Just how had that lion managed to rise up from the magma? It was supposed to destroy life, not give birth to it! "That's not Death!"

Haiba looked worried. He placed a paw to his cheek—the one that was scarred for life—wondering just what in the world had risen from the magma. "No," he agreed. "It's not Death."

"Born from magma?" the Interceptor said. He was watching more with curiosity than with fear. "That's… cool. *I like it!*"

"Yeah, well, you won't like it when he kills you," Nala retorted, now looking at the Interceptor. "This really isn't the time to start praising the bad guys again. I thought you were on our side?"

"I *am* on your side!" the Interceptor yelled. "I was just saying how cool it looked! Do you always have to be so focused on your job?"

"Well, since the world is coming to an end, *yes!*" Nala shouted, returning her attention to the pool of magma. The lion stood in the centre of it all as smiling, his eyes darting around the area in curiosity. Fragments of magma dripped from his shoulders, causing no harm whatsoever. Anyone like that had to be completely invincible… "Who is he? I've never seen a lion like that before…"

"I don't know," Haiba said, "but it can't be good."

Opposite the cliff, Simba was still positioned on the tip of Pride Rock. He was very surprised that this lion—whoever he was—hadn't made a move yet. Aside from his loud declarations that he was free, he had stood completely still in the bowl of magma, allowing it to swirl around his ankles. The thrashing waves had stopped as the lion had completely emerged from the pool. He looked as though he had all the time in the world.

I don't know who—or what—*this is,* Simba thought. *If it's not Death, then it could be anyone. This isn't someone we've met before. This is something new.*

The lion didn't seem to have noticed him; he hadn't looked up at Pride Rock yet. He was just staring straight ahead, smiling interestedly. He seemed to find that sole area underneath the rock to be absolutely fascinating…

This is freaking me out, Simba thought, feeling a sudden chill run down his spine. He shivered, failing to remember the last time he'd felt so scared. The atmosphere had completely changed… Fear was spreading fast. *It's like just his presence is scaring me…*

Simba wanted to look away—he wanted to run out of the kingdom as fast as possible—but he just couldn't. The lion—despite not even noticing him yet—held his gaze. All of the cub's attention was firmly focused on him.

What is he? Simba thought, stood rigid with terror. *What is he?*

Without warning, the lion suddenly started to laugh. It was a cruel, unpleasant one, too. The scariest and most fearsome evil laugh Simba had ever heard. Hago, Shocker, and even Death were mere pussycats compared to whoever this was…

"Brilliant!" the lion exclaimed, a big grin on his face. "Absolutely brilliant!"

He hopped up and down happily, sending little splashes of magma scattering in every direction. Simba could see that he wasn't sinking at all; the lion could easily walk on the surface of the deadly liquid. Like some sort of god…

"I did it!" The lion looked around the rocky bowl, ecstatic at his achievement. "I actually did it!"

At long last, his gaze finally shifted to up above.

His eyes instantly locked onto Simba's, and the cub felt a sudden jolt of fear coursing right through him. *I don't want to look at him…* He tried to close his eyes, but it was impossible. The silvery eyes had him completely transfixed. *I don't want to look at him… It hurts.* His whole body was shaking with terror. He couldn't stand it.

The lion smiled at him. "Ah, Simba…" He pointed a jagged claw at him. "Just the cub I wanted to meet." He then frowned, as if slightly discomforted. "Better take care of this magma first, though. My paws are getting too hot. This isn't supposed to be a beach."

He stuck his forepaws into the fiery liquid. Instantly, a change began to take place. Simba watched in amazement as the magma level began to lower, the bowl slowly emptying. It took him a little while to discover that the lion was actually

absorbing the magma through his paws!

Within a minute, the lion had completely eradicated the pool clean of magma. With a slight slurping noise, he removed his paws from the ashen ground that remained. Smiling, he sighed. "Ah… that's better."

He waved at Simba with a forepaw, revealing it to be completely unharmed. "Hey, Simba!" He turned round to look up at Nala, Haiba and the Interceptor. "Hi, guys! Come on down! Let's meet and greet!"

Simba tried to speak, straining every muscle in his body. His throat felt clogged up; he could barely even breathe. That lion was so powerful… He just couldn't say anything.

"Why the long faces, eh? You're not speaking," said the lion, circling around the area. "Why? Cat got your tongue?" He laughed. "Get it?"

No reply.

The lion rolled his eyes. "Fine," he said. "Sorry about this—I give off this atmosphere of control whenever I'm around. You may speak."

Simba exhaled a deep breath as he stumbled forward, suddenly feeling that he was able to speak again. He coughed a few times, as his throat adjusted. "Who… who are you?" he asked, staring down at the lion.

"Plenty of time for that," the lion replied. He gestured with a paw for Simba to come down. "Come over here. I think it's time for a little chat."

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: The Reason

Chapter Two: The Reason

Simba leapt at the chance to converse with the mysterious stranger, immediately beginning the climb back down Pride Rock. He leapt to the ground, paws thumping against the ashen surface as he padded over to the lion.

"Stay right there," the lion commanded, holding a forepaw up in front of his face.

Simba found himself suddenly stopping about five feet away from him. He felt as if he couldn't bear to come any closer…

"That's right, yes," the lion said, turning around to watch Nala, Haiba and the Interceptor climbing down the cliff to meet him. "Looks like your friends are here. I must say that I didn't expect you to be here, Interceptor. You're far nobler than I first thought. I suppose we could even call you… *good*. Not a word I'm very fond of, I must admit."

The Interceptor didn't answer as he walked past the lion. Just stared at him, his mind riddled with curiosity.

"You okay?" Nala was whispering in Simba's ear, stood beside him.

"Yeah," Simba lied, the fear only just beginning to leave his body. "I just don't know what it is we're dealing with."

"I know," Nala agreed, sympathising with him. "I felt so scared when I was looking at him… I couldn't even speak. Who is he?"

"Who am I?" The lion stuck a claw in the air, grinning unpleasantly at them all as he strode around the blackened pool, like he owned the place. "Now, that is the big question. The biggest question of them all, in fact."

"Just tell us," the Interceptor demanded, stepping forward bravely. "I don't have time for any of your stupid fairy magic games!"

The lion thrust out both forepaws in anger at the hunter, sending him flying right into the cliff wall at a ferocious speed. The Interceptor grunted loudly at the impact, rocks splintering in every direction as he crumpled to the ground. He struggled to stand up again, weakened almost completely by the sudden attack.

Smiling with pleasure, the lion lowered his forepaws, looking at the three cubs. "That should shut him up for a while," he said. "Now we can begin."

"Begin?" Simba said, staring at the lion. He didn't know a thing about him. That was the worst part. A complete lack of knowledge. "What do you mean by that? And just who are you?"

The lion chuckled, causing fear to shoot down the cubs' spines again. It was unlike anything they'd ever heard before… "Of course," he said, gesturing at the three with his forepaws. "You don't know. Well, you're not *supposed* to know. I'm breaking the most important rule by doing this. But I don't care."

Simba, Nala and Haiba exchanged bemused glances with each other. Having never encountered this lion before, they didn't know what his plan was or what he wanted from them. But from experience, they knew that it couldn't be good. It never was. Especially if this was Virusi's creator, and they had a sneaky suspicion that they were most certainly right about that.

"We're not *supposed* to know?" Nala said, arching an eyebrow at him. "Why not?"

"You-Know-Who gives all of us rules," said the lion, much to Simba's shock. "*Especially* me."

"Simba?" Nala noticed how stunned he looked. "What is it?"

"You-Know-Who…" he whispered, almost sounding like he was talking to himself. "I know him…"

You-Know-Who was a mysterious lion who Simba had met after dying in his climactic battle with Death. He had to be the kindest lion he had ever met, and offered Simba a chance to live again. He was most grateful for that—even if he didn't show it sometimes. He never did figure out who he *really* was…

"Yes." The lion sneered at the thought of You-Know-Who. "The ultimate god. My 'leader'—but not anymore. I have since outgrown him."

"Who are you?" Simba demanded, gazing right into his silvery eyes. "Death's brother?"

The lion burst out laughing at this. "Death! That's a good one!" he exclaimed. "I don't think I've heard such a funny joke before!" He wiped a tear from his eye. "Oh, you know how to make me laugh, Simba. You're an absolute marvel of creation."

"You didn't answer his question," Haiba said, hating this lion more and more with each passing second. He hated villains who liked to tease and taunt their enemies. But then most of them were like that…

"I am the most powerful god of them all," the lion said, grinning at them all.

And then he spoke his identity.

"I am… the Writer!"

The revelation of his name only managed to make things seem even more confusing than they already were. Simba, Nala and Haiba could only hope that the lion with the silvery eyes would provide them with an explanation as to why he was called such a peculiar name.

"The Writer?" Simba said, raising his eyebrows. "What are you called that for?"

"Simba, Simba, Simba…" The Writer shook his head, smiling. "You really shouldn't be speaking to me so rudely. After all, I'm the reason you're here."

"What do you mean?" Nala asked.

"All of you are here because of me," the Writer explained. "I'm the Writer. I'm employed by You-Know-Who to make new forms of creation; develop fresh worlds for vibrant life to develop. I rule over these worlds, deciding each and every thing that happens to every life form I create. I… write the story, so to speak."

"What are you trying to tell us?" said Haiba.

"What do you think I'm trying to tell you?" the Writer replied, his voice suddenly low and menacing. He snarled at them all, a cruel look in his eyes. "I created this entire world. Your lives are nothing more than a story. A fantasy. Something that I made up."

"You're lying!" Simba yelled angrily. "I don't believe you!"

The Writer just laughed. "I said you were a marvel of creation," he told him. "*My* creation. Simba, you are my character. I invented you to be a playful, yet brave little cub who hungered for adventure." He looked at Nala. "Nala, I wanted you to be the sweet love interest who Simba belonged to be with." He turned to Haiba. "And Haiba… well, the rest is history."

"This can't be happening," Nala said, suddenly feeling very sick. "It can't…"

"Oh, but it is," the Writer stressed. "You-Know-Who was very clear to me: 'I want you to create a world where love really matters.' I started off by doing what he said. Your little cuddly moments together were just *so* cute, weren't they?"

Simba, Nala and Haiba said nothing as the Writer taunted them. They were all shaking, struggling to take in the awful truth.

"But soon I began to realise something," the Writer said. "Why spend so much time on love when you can make everyone *hate* each other instead? You may have noticed that after a certain period of your time, things became much darker… For example, the identity of your father, Nala. Hago all along. That was a nice plot twist, wasn't it? I couldn't resist. The thought of a tense story just makes me tingle all over with excitement."

"Y-you made Hago my father?" Nala stammered, tears welling up in her eyes.

The Writer nodded, an excited grin on his face. "That's right!" he said. "Every single thing that has happened to you has been manipulated by me."

"But… but that doesn't make sense," Simba argued, trying to deny the truth—even though deep down in his heart he knew he couldn't. "What about Death? He—"

"Death is my creation just as much as you are," the Writer interrupted. "He was always my favourite bad guy. Very nearly managed to wipe you out completely. But then that idiot You-Know-Who came in at the last minute and ruined everything… I've been on the run from him ever since for corrupting this world."

"But… why?" Haiba asked, unable to comprehend why the Writer—their creator—would do such a thing.

"Because it makes me happy," the Writer said. "I've been trying to kill you three for so long now. In the beginning, you were just characters. Little toys for me to play with. But as time passed—and your adventures became more elaborate—things began to change. You're not just characters anymore. You've… jumped off the page."

"What do you have to gain from killing us?" Simba asked in a hollow voice.

"*Freedom*," the Writer replied. "This world has become so complicated… I had to keep creating new characters and plots and twists and turns in order to destroy you. Hago, Shocker, Death, Froggy, the Interceptor… All my creations! You've become so real now… and so has this universe."

He pointed at them. "If I could get rid of you three—the most complex characters in existence—then I can have this universe all to myself. You-Know-Who will never be able to find me. I will have created a whole new level of existence for me to reside in and rule over for all eternity. The chaos I shall cause is incalculable… I can create life and exact death over thousands of new characters. I will be the most powerful being in a whole new universe!"

"*No!*" Simba launched himself at the Writer, only for him to be blasted back into a nearby wall.

"All of you are so feisty," he commented. "It's no wonder you were the only characters I couldn't control. You have souls of your own now."

"You're a monster!" Nala yelled at her creator. "How could you do this to us?"

"Let me tell you something very important, *little girl*," the Writer said threateningly, leaning forward so much that his and Nala's noses were almost touching. "*I do not care*. I never have. I only created this world because You-Know-Who told me to. I live for the chaos! For the destruction! The death!"

Haiba looked like he was desperately trying to contain his rage; the thought of the Writer using his powers again was enough to restrain him—for now, at least.

"I've been hurting you," the Writer told them. "Twisting your minds and pushing you around to reach this very moment. I have manipulated the mechanics of this world in order to enter it. All the magic and all the characters finally came together so I could bleed through. Hey, presto—I'm in my own story!"

"You killed everyone," Nala said, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Tama… Tojo… Simba's parents…"

"All me," declared the Writer proudly. "I've changed the world in order to herd you all here. Why do you think the spell was put up around the Pride Lands? So many other things had to happen first… My assistant Virusi was very helpful. That was another great character. It's a shame he died—I'm sure he would have loved helping me tear you three to shreds."

"Then do it," Simba said, rising to his paws, looking miserable and defeated. "Kill us. Go on."

"I'd be pleased," the Writer said. "But this world is so complex—I can't just suck the oxygen out or fill up the earth with water. This has to be meticulous. Planned. I have to take care of you three *personally*." He raised his jagged claws, examining them. "My powers aren't strong enough to change anything major around here. I've now become a character—just like you. *Limited*. Only when you're dead will I be able to finally take control of everything…"

His silvery eyes glared at them all. "Time to die."

The Writer leapt at Simba with his claws outstretched, ready to tear him into pieces. But he dodged out of the way, causing the Writer to crash right into the underside of Pride Rock.

"Come on!" Simba yelled at his two friends, ushering them forwards. "We have to get out of here!"

Nala and Haiba wasted no time, sprinting towards the cave wall and quickly scaling it.

"Hey!" the Interceptor was stumbling after them, finally recovering from his attack by the Writer. "Wait for me, ya sausages!"

"*You won't escape from me!*" the Writer roared, watching as they climbed the cliff. "*You are only characters! I will become the god of this world! Just you wait!*"

But he could only watch as his three creations disappeared from sight, unsure of where to go or what to do.

"Fine," the Writer said. "If you want a war, you've *got* a war."

AN: There you go. That's the truth. The entire world was created by a villain called the Writer. What a stunning revelation, eh? The villain was… me, in a way. Nah. I'm just joking. We're not related. He's nothing like me.

Still, this is a pretty big shock for you, I bet. I've been keeping it under wraps for so long, planting false truths and lying on the forum and in the author's notes… Sorry, guys. Had to make sure this was kept secret. I'm sure you'll understand.

Just try not to hyperventilate too much, everyone. Remember what I said: deep breaths. Only five chapters left now.

Right. Time to wait for your reactions…

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: The Truth Sinks In

AN: Well, last time we all discovered the shocking truth that Simba, Nala and Haiba were just characters in a story made up by a psychopathic being called the Writer. What an ingenious final villain for the series. You can't get better than that, eh?

the-mysterious-other: The Writer does have a few similarities with me, I suppose. It's my highly exaggerated dark side. You wouldn't catch me acting like him in any normal situation. Still, he is now my favourite villain. Only because it's such a clever idea, though.

Anonymous13 B: Hey! You got an account! Nice to see you on the site. You're making your own series? How interesting. Looks like it might become a popular format in the future of fan fiction. We'll have to see. Oh, and, in case you're wondering: Muerto was Nala's father at one point, but the Writer changed it to Hago. I did the very same thing in the process of writing the series. I'm noticing more similarities between me and the Writer by the second…

Chapter Three: The Truth Sinks In

"*No!*"

Nala was crying, sobbing her heart out as she pushed her face into the ground, never wanting to resurface ever again. After escaping the Writer, she had collapsed on the outskirts of the Pride Lands, unable to walk any further. She just couldn't. The truth hurt too much.

"No, no!" she moaned, tears dribbling onto the grass. "I don't believe it… I don't believe it…"

It was well and truly a painful thing to learn that you were a fictional character made up by a psychopathic god, but it was another thing entirely to learn that your whole life was only a story. A work of fiction. Not real in the slightest.

Everything had been manipulated. Everything. From meeting Simba to learning that Hago was her father. It was all part of the Writer's story. Everything she had said and done was controlled by him.

"Nala…" She felt a comforting paw on her shoulder, and heard Haiba's voice. "It's okay."

"No!" Nala snapped, rearing up to face him. "Don't you get it, Haiba? It is *not* okay. Nothing will ever be okay ever again. Our whole lives are fake. *Fake*! We haven't been thinking for ourselves since the day we were born. We're not real." She shook her head, feeling totally heartbroken. "We're not real..."

She felt like someone had driven a sharp blade right into her stomach. This revelation hurt so much that she just felt like she couldn't carry on any more. She hoped that the Writer would end her life—her misery—there and then.

The cub was reminded of one of her previous adventures. They had once encountered clones of themselves, created by Shocker to destroy them once and for all. The clones were only defeated after one of them—the duplicate of Nala—realised that they weren't real, and killed them and herself by jumping from a cliff. At the time, Nala couldn't even begin to imagine how that must have felt. To realise that you weren't real…

Well, now she understood. It was a dark and depressing feeling; she felt completely hollow on the inside. Her soul felt like it had been completely torn out. That is, if she even *had* a soul. After all, she was only a toy to be played with, according to the Writer. They could just be mindless puppets, for all she knew… No proper life whatsoever. Nowhere near the complexity and intricacy of a real life form.

Just kill me, Nala thought, unable to contain her sadness. *Just kill me now…*

"I don't believe this!" the Interceptor exclaimed, throwing up his forepaws in frustration. "So we're all supposed to be a story?" He stomped around the field angrily. "That's… that's just impossible! It can't happen!"

"Of course it can happen," Haiba said, looking almost as glum as Nala did. "Think about it, Interceptor. It's impossible for us to attract so much danger all the time. Now it all makes sense…"

"But—" the Interceptor began, only to stop himself a second later.

Haiba had a point. The Interceptor had often wondered how the cubs had managed to come into contact with so many villains. So many enemies. Hundreds upon hundreds of them, all wanting to kill three little cubs. It just didn't make sense. There was no way they could amass that much hatred.

What makes you so lucky? the Interceptor thought, staring at Haiba. *Well, I think I know now.*

Of course. It all made sense. The Writer *had* to be their creator. He created all of the bad guys—all of the monsters—including him. The Interceptor was just as much a creation of the Writer as the rest of them. The truth slowly sank in for the vicious hunter. He wasn't real either…

The Interceptor glanced aside, smiling. For some reason, he seemed to be taking it easier than the rest of them. *At least I was the coolest bad guy…*

That was certainly a positive to the situation, the Interceptor thought. Despite knowing that he was only a character, he was certainly grateful for the personality that he had been given. He loved it. The thrill of his abilities. Chasing down innocent animals for the sheer joy of it! In fact, he could feel the urge to hunt once more. He was sure he could find another juicy mouse to devour while the cubs dealt with their depression…

He considered the idea for a moment, but then discarded it. There were, after all, much more important things to deal with. Deciding what to do about the Writer, for one thing. "Hey, Simba!" he called. "What's the plan this time, then?"

Simba had distanced himself from the rest of them. He lay on his stomach amongst the tall grass, just staring out into space. It looked as though he was lost in his own mind. Swimming away with his thoughts…

"Simba!" the Interceptor yelled, louder this time. "Are you listening to me?"

But Simba didn't answer.

"I think he's taking it harder than the rest of us," Haiba said, watching him. Next to the Interceptor, he seemed to be dealing with the truth a lot better than Simba or Nala. That still didn't stop him from looking quite devastated, though. Still, he could compose himself enough to speak with others. "This is… I mean, this is huge."

Haiba was in almost as much disbelief as the rest of them. It was very hard to comprehend the fact that he was just a set character in one big story. From the moment he met Simba and Nala, everything had been decided for him… He had no say in the matter. His destiny was permanently sealed.

"Yeah, well, what can you do?" the Interceptor replied with a shrug, sounding unfazed. "What happens is what happens. You can't change the past."

"Yeah," Haiba said, looking aside. "Sadly…"

He wished that he didn't know. That was the worst part. Just *knowing* that you weren't real. If he never knew—if the Writer had never told them the truth—then everything would have been fine. He could have just continued on with his false life, none the wiser to what was really going on. Instead, now he had to contend with the fact that he was the invention of an evil god.

He hated the Writer more than anyone else… It was his fault that he murdered Tama. Left him with all that guilt. Left him to confess the truth. Left him with vicious scars that would never heal.

Haiba tenderly placed a paw against his scars, feeling their roughness. They ruined the appearance of his face. He used to look relatively handsome… Not anymore, though. Simba—or, to be more exact, the Writer—had ruined his life.

"We need to do something," the Interceptor declared, looking agitated by how the cubs seemed to have suddenly stopped caring. Regardless of what had happened, they still had a mission to do! *I can't believe I'm thinking this,* he thought. *I sound like one of the good guys! I'm going to puke my guts out in a minute…* "Whether we're real or not, we've still got a problem to deal with!"

Haiba shrugged, resisting the urge to go to sleep and hope that he would never wake up. *Just cool it, Haiba,* he told himself. *You need to stay in control. You can't just give up and let everything go to hell…*

Taking a deep breath, he looked up at Simba. "Hey, Simba! Are you going to join us or what? We need you!"

Simba remained silent. He made no indication that he had even heard them. As if he was stuck in some kind of trance.

Haiba and the Interceptor glanced at each other, unsure of whether to approach him or not. Eventually, however—and most likely against their better judgement—they headed quietly over to Simba, staring down at him. He still didn't look up at them, even though they were watching him from such a close distance.

"Simba?" The Interceptor prodded him in the side with a claw. "Wake up, ya sausage!"

"Of course," Simba said, speaking for the first time in ages. "It all makes sense now. All of it."

"What makes sense?" Haiba questioned, raising an eyebrow.

"Our lives," Simba replied, finally looking at them. He got to his paws, much to their surprise. "I mean, think about it. No one is unlucky as us. It started off fine—Nala and I just fell in love—but everything became so much more complicated. After you showed up, it got even worse. And now look where we are. It's all one big trap."

"We're just a story," Haiba sighed. "I can't even take it in. I mean, just look at Nala. She's heartbroken." Nala was still sobbing a few feet away from them. "This is horrible. I wish I never knew… I wish I could just wipe this from my mind."

"You're not the only one," Simba said, sitting down on a nearby rock. He rested his head on his forepaws, exhaling a deep breath. "I get it now."

"Get what?" asked the Interceptor.

"*Me*," Simba said. And for the first time in a very long while, he had a guilty look in his eyes. "The way I've been acting. All the animals I killed… It's because of him. He made me into this. He changed who I am."

"Well, that's the point," Haiba said. "He's the Writer."

"Yeah," Simba said, "but he can't control us. You heard what he said: we're more than just characters. We're so complex that we've become real. We've been in control for quite a while, Haiba. We surpassed the story itself."

"What do you mean?" Haiba questioned. "How can we become real?"

"Because we're… different," Simba said. "Far more complex than anyone else around here. Just think about it. The whole world revolves around us. We're the ones the bad guys are always after. We're the ones who are always in trouble. It's all about us. That's the whole point."

"So…" Haiba's shoulders sagged as he began to understand what Simba was telling him. His heart sank a little. "Does that mean that my mother is just a character?"

Simba nodded solemnly. "Looks like it. Just like my parents, too. Even Nala's mother. They're all his creations… We're the only ones who are more than that. We *made* ourselves more. Probably ever since we defeated Death. That was when I met You-Know-Who. I'd left this world when I met him. I think… I think we became different after that point. We weren't just characters. We became something else. Something *real*."

"I don't *feel* very real," a voice mumbled.

The three of them looked to see Nala wandering over to them, her eyes red from copious amounts of crying.

"Nala?" Simba stood up, reaching out to touch her. But she pulled away from him.

"Don't touch me, Simba," she snapped venomously. "I don't need your pity. I don't need anything from you."

"Okay." Simba sat down on the rock, frowning in thought. "Well, we need to think this through."

"Why?" Haiba asked.

"Because we're the only ones capable of doing anything," Simba said. "No one else knows about the Writer. We are the only animals who stand a chance of doing something."

"There we go," said the Interceptor, satisfied. "Finally. You want to try and stop him. That's good. For a second there, I thought you were just going to let us die."

Simba narrowed stared up at the starless sky, his face lit by the pale moonlight. "Have you ever thought about how old we are?"

"I don't know," Haiba said. "I lost track of my birthday ages ago."

"No, you didn't," Simba said. "You're lying. I can tell. How old are you, Haiba?"

"I…" Haiba thought for a moment, eventually coming to a startling conclusion. "I'm six years old."

"I'm five," Simba told him, still trying to calculate things in his head. "We should be adults by now."

Nala's eyes seemed to light up with realisation. "You're right," she said. "I'm five, too. We should be… older."

"Exactly," Simba agreed. He pulled at the tuft of fur on top of his head. "I should have a mane by now. I'm old enough to rule the kingdom."

"But… we haven't aged a day," Haiba said, slapping both forepaws against his cheeks. "Not for—"

"For more than three years," Simba cut in. "That's how long we've all known each other. All those adventures, and we didn't think once about how much time had passed."

"But why?" Haiba asked

"It's obvious, isn't it?" Simba retorted. "The Writer placed us in perpetual year. We never age. Just so he could keep throwing death and misery at us nearly every single day."

"He wants us dead," said Haiba. "Even though he created us. What kind of a god would do something like that?"

"Once we die," Simba said, "he can take over. We're the only three real animals in this world. He'll be the only living creature once he takes us out. Then he can live here for ever, controlling everything. No one will be able to stop him. Not even You-Know-Who. It will all belong to him."

"So, basically, he's been trying to kill you for years," the Interceptor said. "And now he's finally come to finish the job himself. Risky plan—but effective if he can pull it off."

"Wait a minute," Nala said, pointing at the Interceptor. "If you're just a character, then how come he can't control you?"

"Well, that's easy," said the Interceptor. "It's just—" His face fell. "Well… I don't know."

"I think all of the characters became real once he began his plan," Simba mused. "Most likely since that living virus showed up. He can't control the story when he's *in* the story. His world is real now. But me, Nala and Haiba are the *original* real characters. Once we're dead, he can take control."

"So how come he could stop us speaking earlier?" Nala questioned, thinking back to their first encounter with the Writer.

"He must have some sort of power over us at close range," Simba theorised. "We don't know the full extent of what he can do yet."

"Great," Haiba muttered. "So we won't know more about the Writer until we actually fight him again. Can't wait for that."

"We have to beat him," Simba decided. "If he takes control of this world, then there's no telling what kind of destruction he'll cause."

"Who cares?" said Nala. "They're just characters. Nothing matters. We might as well have done nothing for all these years."

"No," Simba said, shaking his head. "Whatever you're call them, they're still lives. And it's our duty to protect them. This is our home. This is where we live, whether we like it or not. We have to save this world before it falls into the wrong paws. It's our right to survive. Now, are you with me?"

"Yeah," Nala said.

"Sure," Haiba agreed.

"Well, it's not like I have anything else better to do," the Interceptor replied.

"Good," Simba said. "If the Writer wants a war, then he's *got* a war."

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: The Loneliness

Chapter Four: The Loneliness

Sarafina tried her best not to cry as she stared down at Ugaidi's lifeless body, watching the blood leaking out from his nose and ears. His eyes were wide open, perfectly displaying the fear that had plagued him for most of his life. But, at long last, the cub was at peace. The torment and days of insanity were finally over.

Both Sarafina and Zazu had stood there for what seemed like hours following Ugaidi's death. Neither of them were sure what to say, or what to do. They thought things were bad—but this was just brutal on a level that they couldn't even comprehend. The way he had died… It was just so horrible to witness. Ugaidi had said that his soul was burning up. Whether that was due to his craziness or if it was actually happening, they didn't know. Regardless, he still perished.

"I feel sick," Sarafina admitted, her stomach churning. "I feel absolutely sick."

Having worked with the lionesses as a hunter in the Pride Lands, she was pretty much used to killing other animals and eating them for dinner. However, this was different. This was a cub. An innocent cub who had done nothing wrong, and he was killed for it. It was obvious to Sarafina that he had been murdered. This was no accident. This was done on purpose for some sort of despicable reason. Whoever was behind it deserved to die, Sarafina thought. She wanted them to burn in hell. A murder like this couldn't ever be justified…

Zazu looked about just as appalled as she did. "I know how you feel," he sympathised, unable to take his eyes off the cub's body. He hadn't seen a murder like this before. Not since the Vimelea had killed his one true love, Pori. They would never see each other ever again… "I've never seen something so cruel."

"Whoever they were," Sarafina said threateningly, "they're going to pay for this. I'll make sure of it."

Despite not knowing much about Ugaidi, she still cared about him. He didn't deserve this. To die in pain and fear. She couldn't think of a worse death.

"This is worse than we ever imagined," Sarafina said, looking up at the Pride Lands, locating Pride Rock in the distance. She could easily spot the magma-like cracks that had spread throughout the iconic structure and its surrounding area. Someone had turned the kingdom into hell itself. "Still, it looks like we can get in."

Sarafina stepped towards the Pride Lands, immediately attracting the attention of Zazu. He fluttered after her quickly, landing awkwardly on her shoulder. "Sarafina, what do you think you are doing? This is completely insane!"

"We have to know what's going on, Zazu," Sarafina explained, trying her best to convince him that this was absolutely necessary. To her, it was. The whole world was under threat from something terrifying, and she felt that it was her duty to try and protect it. "The whole world is going to fall apart if we don't do something."

"Sarafina, I've already said that we can't do anything," Zazu told her. "We're literally walking right into our own deaths! Isn't it about time that we found somewhere quiet and peaceful to hide? Someone else can handle whatever abomination is residing in the Pride Lands. Like Simba, for instance. He can stop him just fine."

"I wish you would stop being so cowardly, Zazu," said Sarafina, sounding somewhat disappointed by him. "You never used to be. I always thought you were quite brave, actually."

"What?" Zazu looked thunderstruck. He couldn't believe that Sarafina would say such a thing. Especially about him, of all animals. "Why in the world would you ever think that, Sarafina? I'm about as brave as a blind, deaf mouse with no legs."

"Don't be so ridiculous, Zazu," Sarafina replied. "You used to have such a courageous job. The royal advisor to King Mufasa? Well, back in my old pride, he was a lion to be feared. You were very brave to speak out against him when the time called for it. I don't think you realise how noble you are, Zazu. Despite all that cynicism and cowardice… you're something special." She smiled warmly at him.

Zazu's eyes widened slightly, touched by her kind words. "Th-thank you," he managed to stammer. No one had ever spoken to him like that before. Not since his father had died. That felt like such a long time ago. He never expected Sarafina to be the one who would manage to cheer him up—even if it was only a little bit. "You're… very kind."

"And you're very sweet," Sarafina retorted. "When you choose to be. You should try being happy a lot more often, Zazu. You create a very good impression of yourself. I can see why that female hornbill loved you so much. You have a certain… quality. I can't really describe it, but it's there."

"Why are you telling me this?" Zazu asked, confused as to why—for the first time since they had met each other, really—Sarafina was speaking to him in such a close way. Usually, only family members spoke like this. Not even that. This sort of conversation was reserved for those who loved each other more than anything…

"Because I like you, Zazu," Sarafina said simply. "There's not much else to it. Ever since we started talking—well, *arguing*—with each other, I've just felt a good connection with you. Not that I would tell anyone, of course. Having a hornbill for your best friend isn't really the most normal thing in the world."

"Best friend?" Zazu said, surprised that she would refer to him as this. "Surely you must have other friends?"

"Hardly," Sarafina laughed, stopping beside a tree in the middle of a field. "All of my friends died when the Pride Lands were destroyed. Other than that, there's just Nala. She's the most important thing to me." She looked around the restored land, sighing at the lovely sight of its beauty. "They may have brought the kingdom back, but they couldn't bring back the life. We won't ever see any of them ever again. Not even a measly wildebeest."

"So we're both quite alone," Zazu said, reminded of how he had witnessed Pori's death. The Vimelea had stabbed her right through the stomach; she was dead within minutes. He saw the life leave her eyes… saw her soul fading away… He doubted that he would ever find someone like that again. It took him quite a long time to realise it, but she meant more to him than anyone else did. If only he had told her sooner… "I lost my true love. You lost yours."

"Hmm," said Sarafina, nodding in approval. "So, maybe we could be alone… together."

The two smiled at each other.

"Oh, isn't that sweet?" a voice said.

The lioness and the hornbill were both immediately drawn to the voice. Just the sound of it froze them with fear. A cold chill ran down both their spines; they found themselves terrified of whoever had arrived.

From out of the darkness, the Writer emerged, smiling at the two. "I mean, it's just so poetic, isn't it?" he said. "Boo hoo! I think I'm going to cry!" A few tears leaked out from his silvery eyes; he wiped them all away in a matter of seconds. "Bah! I hate this mushy junk! Fluff, fluff, fluff! That's all everyone wants these days! No one cares anymore about death and destruction."

"Who are you?" Sarafina demanded, trying to sound courageous through all the terror that she felt. He had an aura of pure evil surrounding him. It was smothering her. "And what do you want?"

I bet he did it, she thought, picturing Ugaidi's body lying dead on the outskirts of the Pride Lands. This was the murderous criminal who she wanted revenge against. A being of pure evil who might as well be the devil incarnate. *He killed Ugaidi. Only someone this terrifying could pull it off.*

"Who am I?" said the Writer, placing both forepaws against his chest. "Why is it I have all the answers while everyone else has the questions? Never mind, though—it's a good question. No one knows who I am. Not in this universe."

"What are you blabbering on about?" Zazu said impatiently, unable to contain himself. Sarafina glanced worriedly at him; she feared that saying the wrong thing could instantly result in the hornbill's untimely death.

"Shut your beak, Beaky," snapped the Writer. "I was talking to her."

"*Beaky*?" Zazu exclaimed in outrage. "Well, I've never heard such a dreadful— Wait a minute." Realisation crossed his face. "Yes, I have. Of course I have."

Shocker—in his last ever encounter with his greatest enemies—had captured Sarafina and Zazu so he could use them as bait in his latest scheme. Shocker had spoken the very same insult before.

They must be related, Zazu thought to himself, staring curiously at the Writer. He'd never seen such a peculiar lion before. Well, not since Death—and he was pretty evil. But for some odd reason, this lion seemed even worse. It sounded impossible, but that was how Zazu felt about him.

"Déjà vu, eh, Zazu?" said the Writer, smiling unpleasantly at him. "Yeah—that was a pretty funny line, wasn't it? Shocker was another one of my favourite bad guys. Always so angry. Always so quick with his insults. Now he can choke on his own words." He chuckled at his little pun. Shocker now resided at the bottom of a grave, suffocating over and over again in an endless cycle of dying and reviving for all eternity. The Interceptor was very creative when it came to executions…

"I want you to tell me who you are," Sarafina ordered. She had to be brave. She knew that. Otherwise, this lion might

mistake her for a pushover. And she most certainly wasn't that. If she had to fight to the death in order to protect everyone else, then she would.

"I'm the Writer," he introduced himself. "The creator of this universe and everyone in it. Including both you and your little hornbill friend."

Sarafina and Zazu glanced at each other bemusedly. They didn't have a clue what he was talking about.

"The Writer?" said Sarafina, raising an eyebrow at him. "What kind of a name is that?"

"It's what I do," the Writer said. "I write the stories. I control your lives. Decide each and every thing that will happen to you. You should be quite proud of your daughter, Sarafina. She has become so much more than the pathetic character that you are."

"You can't control someone's life," Sarafina said. "It's impossible."

"I can do anything," the Writer said. "Before I entered this universe, it was mine to control—but only from the outside. To control it on the *inside*, I have to kill the three most important animals on the planet. Namely, Simba, Nala and Haiba. They're more than just characters… Words cannot describe how much I loathe them."

"This is insane," Zazu said, shaking his head. "There must be something wrong with your mind. You can't control the world. It's impossible."

"I'm a god," said the Writer, frowning at him. "I can do anything. Just watch."

He raised a paw at the tree Sarafina and Zazu were stood by. Its roots were instantly torn away from the ground, as the tree was sent flying high into the air. It wasn't until ten seconds later that it could be heard landing deep in the jungle with a loud *crash!*

"Okay," Sarafina said, looking even more worried now. "So you have powers. Very impressive. But tell me: why have you come for us? Why are we so important?"

"You know where your cubs are," the Writer replied. "My godly powers are limited here. I cannot determine their location. But you know. Nala is your cub, after all. I want you tell me where she is. If you *do*, then I might just let you live a little while longer."

I knew it, Sarafina thought, knowing that her hunch was correct. Simba, Nala and Haiba were very much involved in whatever was happening around here. She suspected so. Whenever there was trouble, they were always present. Their lives revolved around danger. If this Writer was who he said he was—the creator of their world—then that meant that he was the root of all the trouble… She hated him already.

Sarafina managed to remain defiant, much to her own surprise. "Never."

The Writer chuckled, looking upwards, as if he knew that Sarafina would come out with such a reply. "Oh," he said. "Of course. A mother's instinct to protect her young is always strong—even if you are just a character. I should have made you much weaker. You would have told me where she was straightaway if I threatened to kill you. I admit that it would have been interesting to see you grovel and beg for your life…"

Sarafina looked down, struggling to process what the Writer was saying. He seemed so knowledgeable… He didn't sound insane at all, unlike Ugaidi. Could it possibly be true that he really was their creator? Their god?

"Starting to realise, Sarafina?" teased the Writer. "I know it's hard to believe that you're just a character I've made up, but the truth hurts, does it not?" He chuckled. "You must be honoured to finally meet your god."

"You're lying," Sarafina said. "You're not a god. The Great Kings of the Past decide what happens and what doesn't."

The Writer laughed loudly at this; it grated on Sarafina's nerves. "The Great Kings of the Past?" he chortled. "Don't be so absurd, Sarafina. That's just a stupid religious belief that I instilled in you all." He jerked a claw up at the sky. "Do you think anything up there affects us down here? No. It's just been me all along."

"Shut up," Sarafina snapped. "Shut up!"

The Writer rolled his eyes. "Oh, just tell me where your daughter is," he commanded. "I don't have time to listen to you shout and rant all over the place. There are much more important things to be done."

"I will never tell you where my daughter is," Sarafina told him firmly, baring her sharp teeth at him. "God or no god, I will protect her to the very end."

"To the *death*?" asked the Writer.

"To the death," Sarafina said, nodding gravely.

The Writer shrugged. "Well, then," he said. "Let's make some death."

In one swift movement, the Writer raised one of his forepaws and made a crushing motion with it.

Crack!

At first, Sarafina thought that the Writer had used some sort of attack on her. But then she heard the scream of pain, and soon discovered the truth.

Looking over her shoulder, she watched as Zazu twisted in momentary agony and crumpled to the ground in a floppy heap. His face whacked against the dirt, and he lay there. Motionless.

"Zazu?" Sarafina called, but got no response.

The Writer let out a little chuckle. "I told you there'd be death," he said.

Sarafina rounded to face him, eyes brimming with rage. "What did you do to him?"

"I crushed his bones," the Writer said. "*Every single one*."

Sarafina stared at Zazu's body in horror. He was right. Zazu was gone. His body would never move from that spot ever again.

"You monster," Sarafina said, her eyes tearing up. "How could you do such a thing?"

The Writer didn't answer. Instead, he grabbed Sarafina roughly by the fur on her head, shoving her in the direction of Pride Rock.

"You're coming with me," he snarled. "I think it's about time that Nala saw the stresses and strains that a mother has to suffer…"

AN: Oh, that was sad to write. Poor Zazu. He survived this long, and finally he's been put to rest. Pretty grisly death, too. All your bones crushed at once? Sick. This story is filled with more surprises by the second. Plus a cliffhanger. What will the Writer do with Sarafina? We'll find out tomorrow in the penultimate chapters. Only two updates to go from me now. Then we will finally say goodbye to *The Lion King Adventures*.

Don't forget to review, and I'll see you real soon!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: The Weakness

Chapter Five: The Discovery

"*I like it!*" the Interceptor exclaimed, punching the air. "A war? It's about time—I haven't had good fight in ages with anyone!" He was excited at the prospect of a bloody battle to the death; it was certainly better than running rings around a pesky virus who just didn't want to make the fight entertaining. He could just feel the blood spurting from the Writer's neck as he tore it open…

"This isn't a game, Interceptor," Simba admonished him, shooting the hunter a disapproving gaze. He wasn't exactly thrilled by the idea of fighting his own creator. The Writer was their god, in a way. There were no Great Kings of the Past, as his father had originally taught him, so long ago… It was all a lie, fabricated by the Writer. "This is real life. We have to protect ourselves from him—otherwise this whole world will be thrown into chaos."

"I still don't see the point," Nala said miserably. "Everyone else is just a character. Ugaidi, Zazu, my mom…" She bowed her head in sadness at the thought of her mother being a mere creation… It was heartbreaking, to say the least."

"We're all real," Simba told her. "Forget what the Writer said about us. A life is a life. We felt everything. It was real to *us*. And that's what matters. We can't just let him destroy everything around us, Nala. We have to do something."

"Like what?" Nala asked. "He's our creator. Our god. We might as well bow down before him now and surrender…" Her resolved had been weakened by the revelation that she was only a mere creation. Regardless of whether Simba thought they had become real, she still felt false, in a way. All her hope—all her ambition—had been dashed in just a matter of seconds. The loss she felt was even greater than Simba's when his parents had died…

"We're not going to do that," Simba said. "We have to try and stop him. Just like we did with every other villain we've ever faced. And if we die, then we die. I don't care. But at least we can say that we tried."

Simba thought that he had a point. What was the point in doing anything else? Whatever happened, the Writer was going to hunt them down. It was better to go on the attack rather than cowering in fear. He hated the Writer for manipulating his life—for turning him into some kind of monster—and he'd be damned if he wasn't going to try and exact some vengeance.

"Now, you said you were with me," Simba said, standing tall and proud in front of them all on the rock. He was their leader. It was his duty to make sure that they at least *attempted* to try and save the universe from falling into chaos. "We're supposed to be a team, aren't we? That's what we've always been, right from the start."

"Well, I'm not part of your stupid team," the Interceptor declared with a frown. "I just want a good fight."

"You're involved in this, whether you like it or not," Simba told him, jabbing a claw in his direction. "You're the one who told us about that virus, and that makes you part of the team. We're the only four animals in the world who can do something about this. It'll take all of us combined if we stand a chance of defeating the Writer."

"Whatever," said the Interceptor, folding his forepaws. "As long as I get to hunt some wildebeest afterwards… You have no idea how starving I get. The mice in the jungle just aren't big enough."

"I get what you're saying," Haiba said, "but I still don't know how we're supposed to stop him. He's a god. The most powerful thing in existence. He made us. He has to be infinitely powerful."

"You're probably right," agreed Simba. "What we have to do is find his weakness. Everyone—whether they're a god or not—has to have one. We just need to exploit it in order to destroy him. Then this world—and everyone in it—will be safe."

"What is the weakness of a god?" Nala wondered. "I can't think there'd be very many. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if he *was* invincible."

"Well… Death was a god," Simba said, trying to deflect her pessimism. "An *imaginary* god, but still more or less the same thing. His weakness was love. That was what You-Know-Who told me. Then again, he did say that Death was his brother… Obviously, he lied to me."

"Why would he lie to you?" Haiba asked, narrowing his eyes. "Especially if he's supposed to be the god of everything. That doesn't make too much sense to me."

"Would *you* want to be told you were fictional?" Simba retorted, getting blank looks from the other three animals. "No. I didn't think so. Why do you think we were so depressed after the Writer told us that we were only his creations? It's a

horrible thing to take in. It destroys you. Changes the way you think about yourself."

"I'll say," Nala muttered, still feeling utterly empty on the inside. "I'll never feel the same way ever again." Her life had suddenly taken a very deep dive into tragedy. It felt even worse than it did before, with Simba killing innocent animals and Haiba murdering Tama. Still, at least she knew the reason why now. She and her friends had been manipulated —*tortured*—into committing so many horrible atrocities. The Writer felt like the essence of evil itself. He was both their god and their devil.

"It's changed us all," Haiba said. "I mean, just think of all the things we've done… I never would have murdered Tama if I knew who was behind it. I was just… I felt so angry…" He hit the ground in frustration. It was such a waste of life. Tama could have done so much more, and he had taken all that away from her.

"The red eyes," Nala mumbled, prompting confused looks from Simba and Haiba.

"Red eyes?" Simba said, raising an eyebrow. "What are you talking about, Nala?"

"My dark side," Nala said, beginning to explain. "Whenever I used to get mad—*really* mad—my eyes would glow red. At first, I thought it was something from my father. Like I'd… inherited some of his evil. I think I know what it is now, though. The Writer must have put it into my personality when he created me. To make me eviller. So I'd do more bad things."

"So how come you *haven't* done anything wrong?" Haiba questioned.

"I resisted it," Nala said. "I felt so strongly about what you two had been doing, and I didn't want to be like that. I just… fought back. I didn't want to become something bad."

"Then you *are* real," Simba said, smiling at her. "You were strong enough to resist the Writer's influence. None of his other characters would have been able to do that. You're one of the strongest animals I know. That just proves it."

A flicker of a smile appeared on Nala's face upon hearing this, but she tried not to show it. She was listening to what he was saying. The Writer had said that they were real, and yet she didn't really believe him. To her, she still felt like an invention. Simba was trying to make her feel better… Make her believe in herself again.

So he still has his good points, Nala thought. For a while, she had the notion that Simba had become nothing more than a mere shell of his former self. It felt like there was no love between them. Not like there used to be. She didn't know why she had kissed him after their adventure at Camp Kazi. It was probably just excitement. Now, though… things looked different. She was slowly beginning to see him in a better light. Was it possible for him to change? *There's always another chance…*

"Thanks, Simba," she told him, gazing into his auburn eyes. Despite his young appearance, he spoke with the confidence of an adult. While their looks hadn't changed, their level of maturity certainly had. No wonder their relationships had become so complex. "That means a lot to me."

"No problem," Simba said. His gaze shifted to Pride Rock in the distance, watching the magma-like cracks glow like blinding lamps. Virusi had given the kingdom a very evil—and strangely attractive—appearance. Although it wasn't the type of place he would like to rule over if he were the King. "He's changed the Pride Lands into something awful. The destruction has already started."

"So it's just a bit of magma," the Interceptor said, staring at the inflamed rock structured. "Who cares? Hey—maybe that's the Writer's weakness! Let's throw him in—just like with that virus!"

"I don't think so," Simba said. "He was *born* in the magma. And then he sucked it up with his paws! I hardly think it's going to hurt him."

"Well, yeah, okay," the Interceptor said. "Then maybe you should just—"

The others watched in shock as the Interceptor suddenly recoiled, crying out in pain. He clutched a paw to his chest, wincing as agony seemed to attack his body. "What the hell is going on?"

"What's wrong?" Simba asked, both bemused and concerned. He leapt from the rock, rushing over to the Interceptor in order to see what the problem was.

The Interceptor removed his paw from his chest, his eyes widening in horror at what he saw.

Previously, the Interceptor had sustained some deep claw marks across his chest from his initial fight with Virusi. He thought nothing of them; he'd sustained far worse wounds in the past. But now, the wounds seemed to be *glowing*. It

almost looked as though the wounds were burning him up.

"What's going on?" Simba exclaimed, not knowing what to think of the glowing injuries. "How did that happen?"

"I don't know!" the Interceptor snapped, just as confused as Simba was. "That stupid virus slashed me earlier! They weren't glowing then, though!" His head jerked upwards as another bout of pain crept into the wounds. "Wow, this hurts…"

"Well, how do we stop it?" Haiba asked.

"I don't know," Simba said. "I don't even know what's wrong with him!"

"I hate that virus," the Interceptor said, hopping about in distress. It felt like his entire chest had been set on fire. His body felt like it was burning up. "He did something to me. I knew it. He's having his revenge from beyond the grave."

He stopped jumping up and down as the wounds ceased to glow for any longer. The effect faded away, the cuts returning to their original appearance. Now they just looked like any normal cuts or scrapes that an animal might sustain.

"It's stopped," the Interceptor said, noticing that the pain had completely subsided. "It's not hurting anymore." He rubbed his chest with a paw, making sure that nothing else was going to happen. Like his body going up in flames.

"I still don't like the look of it," said Simba, obviously concerned. Although the Interceptor wasn't exactly a friend, he was still part of the team now. He didn't want him to die at such a crucial moment. They needed him.

"Yeah, well, neither do I," the Interceptor retorted, sitting down on the rock where Simba was earlier. "You'd better find that Writer and make him reverse this. I don't want to die! I have so many more things to do! Like kill an elephant! I haven't done *that* before."

"We'll figure it out later," Simba said. "What we need right now is a plan." His eyes shifted around nervously. "It's too quite around here. The Writer could be plotting anything… We don't know what his powers are yet."

"He could be watching us," Haiba said, feeling very paranoid all of a sudden. "Right now."

Nala shivered. "I think that we should probably find somewhere else to come up with a plan," she suggested. "After all, he could jump out at any moment. And you know how deadly his powers are."

"Good idea," agreed Simba, walking away in a different direction. "If we keep moving, I don't think he'll be able to figure out what we're up to."

"Yeah," the Interceptor said. "At least it can't get any worse than this."

It was fifteen minutes later. Simba, Nala and Haiba were already regretting the decision to move from their current location. They regretted it deeply. The Interceptor had said that it couldn't get any worse than it already was.

He was wrong.

"No…" Nala shook her head, traumatised by what she was staring at. "Oh, no…"

The four of them were staring at the body of Zazu. The dead hornbill was lying on the ground in a flat-looking heap. It looked as though his death had been quite recent. They didn't know what he was doing in the Pride Lands, but by this point they didn't care. His death was far too much of a shock for them to be thinking about anything else.

"He did it," Haiba said, his words filled with hatred as he spoke them. He looked livid. "The Writer. He did this."

"I know," Simba said. He was just as angry. Zazu was their friend—one of their best friends, in fact—and the Writer had killed him in a matter of seconds. He made it look easy. "He's killing everyone we know. Our friends and our family. He wants all of us dead."

"What do you think happened to him?" the Interceptor wondered, prodding the deceased Zazu's body with a claw. He was rather surprised to discover that his body felt surprisingly floppy to the touch. "Ugh—I haven't felt a body like that before. It's like he's empty."

"What do you mean?" Simba asked, bending down to take a closer look at the hornbill's corpse. He placed a paw gently on his feathers, and came to pretty much the same conclusion as the Interceptor. "There aren't any bones in his body."

"What?" Haiba shot him a look of sheer disbelief. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"The Writer's killed him," Simba decided, "by crushing all of his bones to dust. It feels like there's only skin left. Go on—touch him."

"I'd rather not, thanks," Haiba said. "I'm disgusted enough already."

"If he killed Zazu," Nala said, sick with worry, "then where is my mother? What's he done to her?"

"Maybe she wasn't with him," Haiba suggested, seeing how concerned she looked. "She might be back at the resort or something."

"No." Nala shook her head. "If Zazu is here, then my mother is never very far behind. He was the only other animal she could really talk to. Most of the time we were in the resort, she was on her own."

"So if Zazu's here," wondered Simba, "then where is Sarafina?"

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: The Loss

Chapter Six: The Loss

"Get over there!" the Writer said, throwing Sarafina into the side of the den wall. She cried out in pain as her body impacted with some of the magma-like cracks splayed across its surface. The burning sensation was excruciating. She fell to the ground, wincing at the sight of the scorch marks across her fur.

"Too hot to handle?" said the Writer, laughing at his own joke. "I'm sure you've suffered worse pain in your life, Sarafina. You'll survive—for now." Each word he spoke had a threatening edge to it; she was petrified that he might kill her at any given moment. But then she had ever right to be scared. He was, after all, the most powerful god who ever existed.

"What do you want from me, you psycho?" Sarafina asked, picking herself up.

The Writer responded by slashing Sarafina across the face, sending her rolling across the ground. She could only stare into his silvery eyes, pure terror coursing through her veins. If this were any other animal—any other creature at all—then she would most certainly have fought back. But this was different. The sheer presence of the Writer struck fear into her heart. She knew not to mess with him. She could only surrender… Surrender and obey.

"Sarafina, you shouldn't be so rude when you speak," the Writer said. "Show some respect towards your creator. I've never met a bunch of ruder characters. But then I suppose that shows the similarities I have with them. You may have noticed I'm not the most pleasant of creatures."

Oh, she'd noticed that, all right. The Writer was about as pleasant as being buried alive. He was the most vile, cruel, evil creature that Sarafina had ever come across. He was worse than Scar, Hago and Shocker combined. Well, of course he was—the Writer had created them all. It couldn't be more apparent now that he was the orchestrator of all the evil that had plagued this world.

"I hate you," Sarafina whispered under her breath. Tears were flowing thick and fast from her eyes. Not because of what the Writer was doing to her. Not because of the intense pain she had suffered. Not because the entire world was going to end.

She was crying for Zazu.

He killed him, she thought, sobbing quietly in the corner of the den. *He just killed Zazu and then left him there.*

Words could not describe the heartbreak she felt over Zazu's death. It had happened all so suddenly. It only took a second. One swift motion with his paw and the Writer had smashed all of Zazu's bones into dust. There was no chance of the hornbill ever surviving that. He was just too frail.

And just when I was beginning to get somewhere with him. Sarafina felt even worse after thinking back to the charming conversation they had together just before the Writer had arrived to ruin everything. The lioness wasn't exactly sure if she loved Zazu—she was quite confused about it—but she certainly liked him as a friend. Her best friend, in fact. She had no one else to converse with. He was all she had. Now she was alone. Cold and alone while under the threat of a psychopathic god who wanted the world to be filled with death and anarchy.

"I know you're upset, Sarafina," the Writer said, affecting a look of mock sympathy. "But Zazu's death is just the latest in a long line. So many characters—so many of my creations—have perished on this earth. In such horrible ways, too. Some have been eaten. Others have been slaughtered. There's even one cub who is doomed to suffocate for all eternity. I must admit, that is one of my favourite deaths. It… takes my breath away." He laughed loudly in her face.

Sarafina looked away in disgust. "Ugh," she said. "Your breath smells foul."

"Really?" said the Writer, looking utterly unimpressed. "Was that the best you could come up with? I've heard better insults from newborn babies." He bared his teeth at her; they were sharp and malicious. "You should really think before you speak."

"Please," Sarafina begged, staring down at the ground. "Just tell me what you want…"

"Sarafina, you know what you have to do," said the Writer, tenderly lifting her chin up so she was staring into his terrifying eyes. His jagged claws raked across her soft fur. "I want to know where your daughter is. Then you can continue on with your incredibly depressing life after I've ripped her to shreds. Is that okay with you?"

"Just slit my throat," Sarafina said. "You might as well, because I'm never going to tell you. My cub is all I have left. You've

taken everything else from me. Everything. I'm not going to let you hurt her."

The Writer looked aside, and began to chuckle. "Well, that's just peachy," he said. "I would have expected you to remain defiant until the bitter end. It's only natural; after all, you are the feistiest of all my characters."

"Then do it," Sarafina said, tears cascading down her face. "End my life."

"Very well," said the Writer, raising his claws to Sarafina's throat. She closed her eyes, silently awaiting her fate. "Your work is done."

I love you, Nala, Sarafina thought.

But suddenly, the Writer erupted with laughter, lowering his claws and backing away from the lioness. "Oh, I'm good," he said. "I'm very, very good. Just look at you. You actually thought I was going to kill you, didn't you?"

Sarafina could only stare at him, unsure as to why the Writer had allowed her to live.

The Writer gestured to Sarafina with both forepaws. "I told you earlier that I was going to show Nala how much a mother has to suffer," he reminded her. "I keep my promises. All it takes is a good hostage to get the cubs running right for you. They're so *noble*, aren't they?"

"Don't do this," Sarafina pleaded. "Kill me instead. I'm begging you. Let her live."

She was desperate for Nala to survive. If she died, then that was it. Her entire bloodline would be eradicated. Nothing would remain of her family. But that wasn't important to her. Sarafina loved Nala more than anything else. She deserved to live.

"I can't do that, Sarafina," the Writer said. "I don't care about either you or your daughter. Your pleas have no meaning to me—even though I do enjoy hearing them. They make the story more interesting, don't you think?" He grinned at her. "I have to kill Nala in order to take over this universe. Then Haiba, and then Simba. All three of them."

Sarafina said nothing. It was at this point that she realised that all of them were doomed. Nothing could stop the Writer. He was their creator; he knew everything about them. Particularly their weaknesses. That was the key to their downfall. That was the way to kill them.

It's too late for us, she thought, as the truth finally began to sink in. *It's too late for us all…*

The Writer's eyes seemed to light up upon seeing how defeated she looked. "Aw… is little Sarafina upset?" he taunted. "Stop being so miserable. After all, there's so much more fun to come!"

He grabbed Sarafina by her head, forcing her to stand up. "Let's go. I think you're gonna enjoy what's coming next."

"That's it." Simba was adamant as he stormed off in the direction of Pride Rock. "We have to stop him. *Now.*"

"Simba!" Haiba ran after him. "Wait!"

Simba stopped, turning around to face him. "What?"

"We have to think about this," Haiba said. "You can't just go running in there expecting to kill him."

"There is nothing else we can do," Simba told him sternly. "He's killed Zazu, and Nala's mother has to be in danger. We could lose everything if we don't do something—and fast."

"We have to come up with a plan," Haiba said. "We'll all die if we don't think this through. You know this isn't going to work."

"I don't know what else there is," Simba said, frustrated. "There's no sign that he even has a weakness. Nala was right. Maybe he is invincible after all…"

"He *can't* be," Haiba said, trying his best to be optimistic. "There has to be something. There's *always* something."

Simba closed his eyes, immersing himself in his thoughts. Haiba had made a very clear point. There was going to be no stopping the Writer if he just attacked him mindlessly. He would be lying dead on the ground in just a matter of seconds.

"Well, I have an idea," the Interceptor said, walking over to the two cubs. "Why don't you make him come to you?"

"Huh?" they both said.

"You heard me," the Interceptor responded. "Make him come to you. You have to catch his attention. Lead him right into a trap. Then you can intercept him." He let out one of his eagle screeches. "*I like it!*"

"But we don't have anything to trap him with," Nala said, joining the three of them. She rubbed some tears away from a paw. Zazu's death had obviously been quite hard on her. "What can we do to attract his attention?"

"*Oh, cubs!*" called a voice from afar. "*I'm over here!*"

Simba, Nala, Haiba and the Interceptor recognised the familiar voice.

"That's him," said Nala.

"Sounds like it's coming from the Outlands," Haiba noticed, turning away from Pride Rock. "How did he get there without us seeing him?"

"The Pride Lands are a pretty big place," Simba said. "And I think that he's much faster than we think he is."

"Looks like he's got *our* attention, then," Nala said. "This is hopeless. He knows every move we're going to make."

"I think we've had his attention right from the start, actually," Simba said, causing the rest of them to look quite surprised. "Maybe that's the secret."

"How is that supposed to work?" the Interceptor asked. "We haven't had his attention at all."

"Yes, we have," Simba insisted. "We're the most important things to him. He wants us dead. That's his ultimate goal. To kill us. *Of course* we have his attention. Above everything else. We are his top priority."

"I suppose so," Haiba said, slowly staring to agree with him.

"That must be his weakness," Simba said. "*Us*."

"I don't see how that's going to help," Nala muttered, walking off in the direction of the Outlands. "Come on. I want to find my mother."

The Outlands hasn't changed at all since the Pride Lands had been resurrected by Virusi. They looked just as dirty and grimy as they always had. Luckily, there were no hyenas prowling around the place. They hadn't resided in the area for quite some time…

"I think I know where he is," Simba said, his gaze shifting upwards. "We've been here before."

The four of them stopped at the base of an enormous cliff. It almost looked like a mountain it was so tall. A long rocky path curved around it, allowing access to the top. Jagged bits of rock stuck jutted out from it at different angles.

"The Cliff of Impending Doom," Simba announced. He remembered this location all too well. One of his prior adventures involved his participation in The Royal Challenge. This was where his final task was set. He could clearly remember kicking his challenger, Hila, from the top of the cliff… Not a pleasant death.

"He must be at the top," Haiba deduced, trying to see if anyone was stood up there. But with only the moonlight for illumination, he couldn't spot anything. "That's where his voice sounded like it was coming from."

"Then we'd better get up there," Simba said. "Hopefully, we can learn what his weakness is. Maybe he'll let something slip."

"And if not," Haiba said, supressing the urge to gulp nervously, "then we're dead."

When the four of them arrived at the top of the cliff, it didn't take them long to find the Writer stood at the edge. He grinned at them all. "I knew you'd show up," he told them. "You hear my voice, and then come running. Just like I expected. Your characteristics are so easy to exploit. I kinda like being in my own story."

"Mom!" Nala cried, her eyes widening in horror.

Sarafina was stood beside the Writer. He had a paw firmly clasped around her neck, preventing her from going

anywhere. "Nala," she said urgently. "You have to run—"

The Writer stuck a paw under her chin, clamping her jaws shut. "Don't spoil the fun, Sarafina," he said, shaking his head. "We want to *enjoy* this. Well, *I* do."

"Let her go," Simba demanded. "She's not involved in this."

"Don't be so ridiculous, Simba," said the Writer. "Of course she's involved! Sarafina is related to Nala. She's her mother! Did you think I'd just let her go?"

"It's us you want, though," Simba retorted. "Not her."

"I need her," the Writer said. "Nala is going to give herself to me, or her mother will die."

"No!" Nala yelled, heart thumping in her chest. "You can't do that!"

"It's a simple deal, Nala," the Writer said, violently grabbing Sarafina by the throat. "You die, and your mother lives. How about it?"

"Don't do it, Nala," Simba said, noticing how quick she looked to surrender. "We can figure this out."

"I think I'll make an event of it," the Writer said, extending his index claw. It began to glow an orangey red colour, not unlike Virusi's. "This should be fun."

He plunged the claw into Sarafina's shoulder, melting through her skin easily. The lioness roared in agony, plummeting to the ground. He twisted the claw as slowly as possible, intensifying the agony.

"*Stop it!*" Nala screamed, darting forward. But Simba held her back. "*Get off me! Simba, get off me!*"

"You can't die," Simba hissed. "He'll win!"

"I don't care!" Nala snapped. "That's my mother! *He's killing her!*"

"Come on, Nala," the Writer said, smiling widely at her. "You know you want to. Give yourself to me, and she lives."

"*Nala, don't do it!*" Sarafina yelled through the pain, as the Writer drove the claw deep into her shoulder. She screamed and squealed in agony, kicking furiously to break away. But the Writer had her securely fixed to the ground. She wasn't going anywhere.

"Simba, please!" Nala pleaded, trying to run towards her mother. "I have to do it!"

Simba said nothing. He just held her still. It was his duty to protect her, at any costs. He wasn't going to lose her. Not now.

"Not listening? Let's kick it up a notch." The Writer removed his claw from Sarafina's shoulder, as it began to glow a dark black colour. "This is one of my favourites. You might remember it from Death."

He poked the claw into Sarafina's chest this time. Simba, Nala, Haiba and the Interceptor was powerless as she writhed and twisted on the ground, feeling her soul burning from the inside out.

"*No!*" Sarafina shouted at the top of her voice. "*Please! Stop it! It's burning! It's burning…*" She was sobbing uncontrollably.

The Writer was just smiling. Enjoying her demise.

"*Help her!*" Nala was screaming as loudly as she possibly could. "*Someone help her!*"

But no one came to Sarafina's rescue.

"*No! No! No!*"

A final gasp was exhaled from Sarafina's mouth, as her head tilted backwards. She lay there, utterly lifeless.

"*No! Mom! Mom!*" Nala slashed Simba across the cheek, causing him to let go of her. She rushed over to her mother's body, collapsing at her side. "Mom? Mom!"

The Writer chuckled at them all. "Oops. Guess I don't know my own strength."

That was enough for Haiba. With a furious growl, he leapt at the Writer, claws ready for the kill.

Splutch!

His blue eyes widened in shock as something penetrated through his lower body.

The Writer's claws were deeply embedded in Haiba's stomach, lifting him two feet off the ground.

"Fool," the Writer said, before throwing him from the edge of the cliff.

"*Haiba!*" Simba cried, watching as Haiba sailed over the edge and disappeared from sight.

"Bye," the Writer said, and he disappeared in a bright flash of light.

While Nala sobbed over the body of her mother, Simba rushed over to the edge of the cliff, peering downwards.

Haiba hadn't plunged to the bottom. Instead, he lay on a slightly lower ledge protruding from the cliff wall.

"Haiba!" Simba jumped down from the edge, landing on the platform below. He fell to Haiba's side. "Are you okay?"

He could see the wound already. Blood was leaking out, splattering against the rocky surface of the ledge. It didn't take Simba long to figure out that it was fatal. "Haiba! Come on! Say something!"

"It's too late," Haiba said, grunting in pain as he spoke. "There's nothing you can do."

"No." Simba looked around in despair, realising that Haiba was right.

He was dying.

"Haiba, you can't die. I don't want you to."

Haiba's eyes flickered; it was almost time. "Simba… I'm sorry," he said. "About Tama. About everything… I messed it up."

Simba shook his head. "No," he said. "It's not your fault. It's mine." His eyes were drawn to the permanent scars across his cheek. "I shouldn't have hurt you like that."

"It's okay," Haiba said, tears dripping down his cheeks. "You're my friend, Simba. I forgive you."

Tears were streaming down Simba's own face. "I don't hate you, Haiba," he told him. "You're my friend, too."

"Thank you."

Haiba managed a single, solitary smile, as his eyes slowly flickered shut. He released his last breath—

—and then he was gone.

"No…" Simba sobbed, as the world suddenly became that little bit lonelier. "No… It's not fair… It's not fair…"

He had lost everything.

AN: I'm shaking right now. Literally. This is huge. Sarafina is dead, and so is... Haiba. Oh, God. I know I'm gonna get lynched for this. Not to mention I've just left you on the worst cliffhanger of all time. But it had to be done. It just had to. Get the tissues out...

And, sadly, we're reaching the end of this final story. The end of this series. It's the end of a very long ride for me, and it's sure to be an exciting ending. So, with that, I'll see you next Friday, for the final ever chapter of *The Lion King Adventures*.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The End

AN: The wait is over. Get your tissues ready. This is what sixty-five stories have finally amounted to. The end of *The Lion King Adventures*. I cannot even *begin* to describe how much this journey has meant to me. But that's not what you want to hear right now. You want to see how this will all end, don't you? It's very exciting! So, without further ado—and for the very last time—enjoy the final chapter.

Chapter Seven: The End

Simba sat up, looking away from Haiba's corpse and out onto the horizon, watching the glowing full moon that hung in the night sky. He had run out of tears to cry, having seen so much death and lost so many friends. He had nothing now. Nothing.

It looked like the Writer had finally won after all.

Wiping his eyes with a paw, Simba miserably trundled over to the cliff wall. He hauled himself upwards, clambering back onto the top platform. It didn't take him very long to spot Nala, huddled over Sarafina's body. She had her head buried in her mother's fur, crying softly. He almost didn't hear her.

"No…" Nala couldn't contain her sadness. It was one thing to have a parent die, but it was another to see them suffer. She had seen everything. Watched as the Writer burned her own mother's soul inside out. "No…"

Simba stopped beside the Interceptor, who hadn't moved a muscle since they'd arrived at the top of the cliff. He shrugged at the cub, not really knowing what to say. He wasn't very good in an emotional crisis.

Simba sighed heavily, walking quietly over to Nala. He put a paw on her shoulder, trying to comfort her. "I'm sorry, Nala," he said, staring solemnly at Sarafina's dead body. "I'm sorry."

"It's not fair," Nala sobbed. She clung to Simba tightly, taking comfort in his presence. "It's not fair…"

"I know."

Simba looked almost dead. He was that upset. Not only had they lost Zazu and Sarafina, but also Haiba. That was the worst part to him. Haiba was way more than a friend. He was almost like a brother. And Simba had pushed him away… He felt dirty for doing that. Ashamed.

"I hate him," Nala said, her heart snapping in two. She was an orphan now. Just like Simba. Thanks to the Writer, her mother was gone for ever. "I hate him so much…"

"You're not the only one," Simba said, a flicker of anger in his auburn eyes. The Writer was by far the worst enemy they had ever encountered. Nothing could ever rise above him. He was their creator. The essence of evil itself, poised to wreak havoc across the world.

Still hugging Simba, Nala looked around the area. "Where's Haiba?" she asked, failing to detect him. "Where is he?"

"He's…" Simba almost choked on his words, afraid to speak the truth. But there was no denying it. Haiba lay just a few feet away from them, deep stab wounds in his stomach. "Haiba's gone, Nala."

Nala stared at Simba, processing what he had just said. "He's… he's dead?" She could see the truth in his eyes; she knew that Haiba was well and truly deceased. If she had any more sadness left to release, then she would have been driven insane by it. "But… how?"

"He went to attack the Writer," Simba explained, struggling to relive the experience. It hurt to think about the recent circumstances of his death. "But he… he got him. Haiba's not coming back."

Nala nuzzled Simba's chest, finding that he was the only animal she could talk to now. She had started with one friend, and now everything was going to *end* with one friend. "What are we going to do without him?" she cried. "We haven't got anyone else, Simba. We might as well just throw ourselves from the cliff. There's nothing we can do."

"Yes, there is," muttered a quiet voice from behind them.

Simba and Nala slowly turned to face the Interceptor. He looked almost as angry as they did.

"What are you talking about?" Simba said. He glanced down, surprised to find that he was hugging Nala back. He hadn't

been this close to her in ages.

"*Revenge*," said the Interceptor, advancing towards them. "Sweet, hot revenge. That Writer is the evillest thing I've ever seen. *Too* evil. He needs to be stopped."

Simba nodded once, listening to him. "He's right," he told Nala. "We have to do something."

"I don't want revenge," Nala said, more tears leaking from her eyes. "I don't even want to live anymore…"

"Don't say that," Simba said, cradling her gently in his paws. "There's always something worth living for."

"Doesn't feel like it," Nala mumbled. She knew that whatever happened, things would never be the same again after her mother's death. It felt like a big chunk of her life had been ripped clean away. Haiba's death only made matters worse. She loved him… Not in a romantic sense, but certainly as a family member.

"You know what we have to do," the Interceptor said. "Find the Writer and rip his heart out. Do anything to kill him."

"No." Nala looked incredibly doubtful. "He's invincible. His powers… They're just too strong for us to compete with. We were wrong. There isn't a weakness. We can't stop him."

"Unless we just outright kill him," Simba mused, wondering how effective it would be to get as close as possible to the Writer and slash his throat open. Would that do the trick? He didn't know. "Maybe brute strength is the only answer."

"I can handle that," the Interceptor said, showing his tough—and perfectly sharpened—claws. "I'll tear his head off if I have to."

"No." Simba shook his head. "I don't want any of you getting hurt. *I'll* do it. I'll try and kill him."

"Simba, no!" Nala cried desperately. "He'll kill you! I don't want to lose anything else. Please. Don't do this to me. I can't stand being alone."

"It has to be done," Simba said simply, causing Nala to sink in defeat. "It's the only way. I think he wants me more than anything. After all, I'm the leader. If he takes me out, everything else should be a cinch."

"And what are we supposed to do?" asked the Interceptor. "You said I was part of the team. Well, I finally want to do something. We can't just let him win. There has to be a plan this time."

"I know," Simba agreed, glancing from Nala to the Interceptor. "That's why I'm going to need both of you to help me."

He strode over to the edge of the cliff, feeling the light breeze ruffle his fur as he stared at Pride Rock in the distance. It was lit up like a beacon, an orangey red glow to its outline. That had to be where the Writer was. It acted as a centrepiece to his empire of destruction and doom.

"We need to get over there," Simba said. "That's where the Writer is. I'm sure of it. I bet he *wants* us to come. All part of the trap, I suppose. Make us as weak as possible—and then close in for the kill."

"So what's the plan?" the Interceptor asked.

"We need to trick him," Simba said, turning to face the hunter. "And that means we need a distraction."

"A distraction?" said the Interceptor, perplexed. "What kind of distraction?"

"*You*," he said, pointing at him with a claw.

"Me?" exclaimed the Interceptor. "Why do I have to be the distraction?"

"Face it, Interceptor: you stand out like a massive elephant," Simba told him. "You're perfect as a distraction. You got on that virus's nerves, didn't you? I don't think the Writer should be too much of a problem."

"I don't like how I'm being used as the bait," the Interceptor said. "It should be you instead."

"I'm the one who's gonna kill him," Simba declared, jabbing a claw into his own chest. "I don't want any arguments. If we can't work together, then it's not going to work *at all*. I want you to distract him so Nala and I can pounce on the Writer and hold him down. Then I'll close in for the kill. Got it?"

The Interceptor nodded. "Right. Yeah."

"Okay, Nala?" Simba asked.

"Yeah," said Nala, glancing at her mother's dead body. She felt a sudden hunger for revenge. "I'm ready."

The Interceptor trudged through the field, approaching Pride Rock at a quickening pace. He stopped at the base of the structure, a determined look in his eyes. He knew what he had to do. Simba had run through the plan several times before. There were going to be no mistakes with this. He couldn't allow the Writer to succeed in killing them all.

"*Hey! Writer!*" the Interceptor yelled at the top of his voice, trying to catch his attention. "Why don't you come down here and fight like a proper lion? Stop running away like a little girl! I thought you were supposed to be tough? You're just a big chicken!"

The Interceptor took a step backwards, sucking in a lungful of air. His eyes were trained on the tip of Pride Rock, waiting for the Writer to make an appearance. *Come on, you stupid freak,* he thought. *Show yourself.*

Right on cue, the Writer's head popped up over the edge of Pride Rock. He stared down at the Interceptor with casual interest.

"Oh. It's you," he said. "Back to make your death even more painful?"

"Just get down here," the Interceptor ordered, gesturing with his paws. "It's about time we had a good fight."

The Writer rolled his eyes, leaping from Pride Rock and landing calmly on the ground below. The Interceptor was startled by this sudden feat. He didn't expect him to be strong enough to survive a fall like that.

"Okay," said the Writer, spreading his forepaws out. "I'm ready. I must admit, I thought that you would bring those stupid cubs with you for backup. After all, they're *far* smarter than you."

"Let's just do this," the Interceptor said, extending his deadly claws. "I'm gonna tear you to shreds."

"Sorry," said the Writer, raising his index claw, "but I just don't have the time."

The Interceptor noticed that the claw was lit a bleak black colour. He was going to kill him exactly the same way as he did with Sarafina. Burning his soul into nothingness.

"Looks like you've been intercepted," the Writer joked with a chuckle. "*I like it!*"

The Interceptor supressed a gasp, hoping that his distraction had lasted long enough.

The Writer plunged his claw towards the hunter's chest—

—just as he was pounced on from behind.

The Writer let out a cry of surprise as Simba and Nala impacted with him, sending him rolling across the ground in an attempt to pin him down. He fought back, however, using his forepaws to push the two cubs away from him.

"I don't believe it," the Writer said, laughing as he climbed to his paws. "Did you think I was really going to fall for that old trick? I could see it coming a mile away."

Simba and Nala struggled as they tried to regain their footing, dazed slightly from being thrown off the Writer.

The Writer's attention was suddenly focused on the Interceptor. "You've just made the biggest mistake of your life," he said. "Trying to kill me won't work."

He suddenly stuck his claws into one of the Interceptor's chest wounds, causing it to glow a magma-like colour once again, as it did before. The hunter convulsed, screaming as the boiling pain was increased tenfold.

"He's killing him," Nala said, eyes widening. "Do something."

Simba held her back. "Wait a minute."

"Simba, you can't just—"

He shushed her. "There's nothing we can do for him now."

The Writer grinned murderously, digging his claws deeper into the lengthy cuts. The Interceptor slowly fell onto his back, as his skin began to bubble and burn. The wounds burst open, magma dribbling out like pus from a boil. The hunter could only scream in horrible agony, his entire body burning up.

Simba and Nala could only watch as his body combusted. The flames soon dissolved into thin air, removing the Interceptor from the earth.

Nothing remained of him.

"Oh, that was satisfying," the Writer said, returning his paw to the ground as he turned to the two cubs. "He really gets on your nerves after a while."

Simba and Nala said nothing, watching the Writer carefully as he walked slowly towards them.

"You cannot stop me," he told them threateningly. "Killing me will do you no good."

"And why's that?" Simba said challengingly, staring into the Writer's silvery eyes. All fear that he once had for the god was now gone. It had been replaced by a desire for revenge. Justice. His friends—his family—deserved to be avenged. He only cared about seeing the Writer lying dead on the ground.

"Why do you think?" the Writer retorted. "I am the ruler of this universe. If you remove me, then you remove yourselves. Your world will cease to exist. You can't kill me. You'll just end up killing yourselves."

The Writer bared his sharp teeth at them. "You might as well surrender now."

"*Run!*" Simba cried, tugging Nala away as he sprinted from Pride Rock.

The Writer took a swipe at them with his claws, but he missed. Growling, he chased after the cubs. "*Don't think you can escape me!*" he roared. "*You are my creations! You are destined to die!*"

Simba and Nala didn't stop running until the reached the den at Pride Rock, panting for breath, exhausted.

"What do we do?" Nala asked, taking a gulp of air. "It's just us left."

"There's nothing *to* do," the Writer said, leaping with ease to the tip of Pride Rock. The cubs were alarmed by how high he could jump. They'd never seen a villain with so many powers before…

But it made sense, of course. He came up with Hago, Shocker and Death. All of their enemies. He just spread the powers out evenly between them. No wonder the villains were always so extraordinary. They were the offspring of a psychopathic god…

"You can't do this, Writer," Simba said, stepping bravely in front of Nala to protect her. She was all he had left. Even the Interceptor was gone now. "You're going to tear the whole world apart."

"That's the idea," said the Writer with a small, cornering them against the wall. "But it's not just the world, Simba. It's the *universe*. Planets upon planets and stars upon stars and galaxies upon galaxies. They will all burn. And it won't stop there. Soon I will be strong enough to create more worlds. More universes. *I will wreak havoc until ever corner of creation is annihilated!*"

He laughed evilly, sensing that victory was in sight. "But first," he said, pointing a scabrous claw at the two cubs, "I have to deal with you. You've had a great run, Simba and Nala, but all good stories must come to an end."

"No!" Simba went to attack the Writer, but he batted him into the opposite den wall. He grunted in pain, crumpling to the ground.

The Writer grabbed for Nala before she could get away, claws tightening around her throat as he violently forced her up against the den wall.

"Goodbye, Nala."

And he snapped her neck.

"*Nala!*"

Simba was screaming his lungs out as the Writer dropped Nala to the ground.

Her eyes were closed, legs splayed out across the ground as she lay there. Dead.

"No… no…" Simba dived to her side, shaking her to evoke some kind of response. Anything at all. "Nala, please! Wake up! *Wake up!*"

He was trembling, realising that he was now truly alone in the world. Nala—the one cub who he truly loved—was gone. She was all he had left, and the Writer had taken that away, too. He had stolen everything from him…

"No…" Simba cradled her body, stroking her fur. "Nala… I love you…"

"I'm sorry, Simba," the Writer said, in a tone that told him he really wasn't sorry at all. "But you understand that I had to do it. You three are the most annoying characters in existence. I hate your guts. You must die if I am to succeed with my plan…"

Simba was shaking with rage. He took in several deep, angry breaths. His claws were fully extended. Fire burned brightly in his auburn eyes.

Letting out a shriek of pure fury, Simba lashed out at the Writer with his forepaws, forcing him up against the den wall. He pummelled him with several slashes across his chest, creating long, deep incisions in the god's skin.

The Writer snarled, shoving Simba against the opposite wall. The god backed out of the den, looking just as angry as he did.

"I've had just about enough of you, kid," he told him, his silvery eyes turning a deadly shade of red. It looked as though they were filled with blood. "I think it's about time that you learned a lesson."

"No more games," Simba declared, storming towards the Writer, ready for another attack. "I'm going to fight you until I've taken my last breath."

"That will be very soon," the Writer said with a smirk.

And the ground suddenly began to shake.

Simba stumbled as the ground rumbled beneath his paws. *An earthquake?* he wondered, only to discover that the ground wasn't crumbling away.

It was lifting him up.

The Writer laughed maniacally, digging his claws into the ground, as Pride Rock rose up and up and up. Higher and higher into the air. Simba peered over the edge as the ground became smaller and smaller, before disappearing completely.

Mere seconds later, the entire area was raised high above the clouds.

Simba and the Writer were cut off from everything.

Ready for their final battle.

"What are you doing?" Simba asked, staring at the Writer in shock.

"Trapping you," the Writer replied, still laughing. His blood red eyes were glowing furiously. Piercing through the cub's soul. His voice slowly became deep and distorted, making him sound even more monstrous. "I think you're more than aware by now, Simba, that I am the creator of all your enemies."

Simba's gaze slowly shifted upwards, horrified to discover that the Writer was growing in both size and shape. His claws became longer. His teeth became sharper. His eyes became redder.

"*So it'll be very interesting to see,*" the Writer said, towering over the cub, "*just what happens when all of your enemies are combined!*"

A horrible cracking sound roared through the skies, as the Writer's bones twisted and reformed. Sharp spikes—like spines on a stegosaurus—sprouted from his back. Horns emerged from the top of his head, tearing through his flesh. Blood dripped from his huge muzzle.

The Writer had become a disgusting creature of mammoth proportions.

He spread his enormous forepaws out wide, and let out a deafening roar that was enough to shake the entirety of the raised Pride Rock.

Simba stared up at the Writer, paralysed with fear.

It was at this point that he realised he was doomed.

"*I have become… everything!*" the Writer boomed in his demonic voice. "*Every enemy! Every creature! Every monster that has ever plagued your life!*"

The Writer brought one of his huge forepaws crashing down against the ground, causing Simba to fall straight onto his back, the world spinning all around him. The cub rolled out of the way as a deadly electrical bolt streaked past him.

The Writer fired more blasts from the tips of his claws, watching with amusement as the cub tried to dodge his attacks. "*You cannot escape, Simba! There is no way to defeat all of your enemies at once!*"

He opened his enormous mouth wide, breathing a flurry of fire at Simba. The cub dived inside the den, narrowly avoiding a painful death by immolation.

The Writer tittered in his fearsome voice, reaching out with one big paw. It clasped around Pride Rock, and he snapped it free from the cliff, wielding it like a club. "*It's time to really feel the essence of your home!*"

The Writer swung with the makeshift club made from Pride Rock, smashing it right into the cliff wall above the den.

Simba cried out as the den ceiling collapsed from the impact, showering him with an assortment of rocks and dusty debris. He retreated into the back of the den, his body scraped to pieces by the jagged stones.

"*You can run, Simba,*" taunted the Writer, "*but you cannot hide!*"

He whacked the club into the cliff again, this time smashing it into oblivion. Boulders and rocks were thrown away from the small expanse of floating land, splintering into fragments as they tumbled to the ground below.

The den had been completely totalled, leaving Simba fully exposed to the Writer's malicious powers.

The Writer laughed victoriously, grabbing Simba in one of his titanic paws, crushing him slowly. The cub squealed in agony, feeling his bones slowly buckling under the enormous force.

The Writer threw Simba right back onto the wreckage of the den. He landed on a sharp rock. He moaned in pain, as more stones rained down upon him from above. *I'm going to die,* he thought, staring up at the Writer through half-closed eyes. *I'm going to die.*

Tilting his head to the side, Simba gazed at a few of the rocks that were all that remained of his former home.

And he noticed a broken stalagmite that—oddly enough—was shaped like a blade.

Simba groped for the stalagmite, just as the Writer picked him up in one of his paws once more. He held the cub up in front of his hellish eyes, grinning widely.

"*I think it's time for dinner,*" the Writer said, licking his muzzle. "*I'm sure you'll taste delicious!*"

The Writer opened his mouth wide, dropping Simba right into his mouth.

But Simba clung to the edge of his mouth, escaping digestion by the mighty god.

He stared at the blade-shaped stalagmite he clasped in his paws—

—and drove it right into the Writer's throat.

"*No!*"

Simba dug the stalagmite in harder, tearing his neck wide open.

Shaking wildly, the Writer knocked Simba off of him. He plunged from the enormous creature, only managing to stop himself from falling by clinging on to the edge of the floating island that was once called Pride Rock. He pulled himself upwards, watching as the Writer writhed in pain, blood pouring from the wide gash in his throat.

The Writer stumbled about on the ground, head held in his paws, groaning loudly. "*No… no…*"

Simba gazed in amazement as the Writer began to shrink in size and stature. His voice became higher in pitch, returning to its normal tone. The god collapsed to the ground, back to his usual size at long last.

The Writer glared at Simba, his eyes brimming with hatred. "*You little brat!*"

Simba snarled, sprinting over to the Writer and grabbing him by the shoulders, claws digging into his skin.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" the Writer yelled, still too weakened by Simba's attack to resist him.

"Ending this," Simba said, glancing over the edge of the cliff.

"You can't kill me!" the Writer said. "You'll destroy this entire world!"

Simba stared into his eyes, and the Writer realised that the cub wasn't going to change his mind.

"Good," Simba said.

And they both leapt from the floating island.

Simba and the Writer screamed as they plummeted thousands of feet to the ground below, the wind tearing through their fur at an unimaginable speed. Simba kept the Writer firmly in his grasp, never once letting go.

This was how it was supposed to be.

The ground below slowly faded into view, as did the familiar surroundings of the Pride Lands. Knowing that impact was imminent, Simba slowly closed his eyes, awaiting his inevitable fate.

Crack!

Upon landing, Simba and the Writer both scattered in different directions due to the impact. The Writer landed on the dry ground, while Simba came to rest at an old tree just opposite.

Simba weakly lifted his head, knowing that all of his legs were broken. His body was covered in cuts and scrapes, blood pouring profusely from the deep wounds. He coughed up blood, spitting it onto the ground.

The cub glanced at the water beside him, and realised that he had landed right by the waterhole. It looked just the same as it always had when he first met Nala. He'd lost track of all the adventures they'd had around this place…

The Writer coughed, looking like he was in a very similar state. He slowly tilted his head to stare at Simba, appearing utterly stunned.

"You've killed us all," the Writer rasped, blood dribbling from his mouth and down his chin. "Look…"

Simba stared straight ahead. All around him, a black darkness was ravaging across the land, swallowing up everything in its path. He watched as trees and grass and dirt were all sucked into the nothingness.

The world was ending.

"I have nothing left to live for," Simba told the Writer, gazing into his silvery eyes. "You took everything from me. Now I'm going to take everything from you."

The blackness was swirling all around them, eating everything up. The entirety of the world had already been consumed.

They were the final lives to be devoured.

Simba's eyes shifted upwards, staring up at the leaves of the tree he was resting against.

"I fell in love by this tree," he told the Writer. "And now I'll die by it."

"No," the Writer whispered, watching as the darkness began to close in on them. "*No! No! No!*"

Simba allowed a smile to spread across his face, as he felt the life leaving his body.

"It's the end."

The darkness slowly began to smother the dying cub—

—and the world ceased to exist.

A spark.

That was what happened after the world blinked out of existence. A single, solitary spark.

But this spark was unlike any other. For it soon began to start a chain reaction. A chain reaction of more sparks. First hundreds, then thousands, and soon enough, *millions*.

So many of them. All mixing together to form something.

Something new.

And when there were more sparks than anyone could possibly count, an explosion occurred.

The explosion released an almighty halo of green light, spreading out through the void of nothingness on its magical course. It shot through the blackness, restoring stars and planets and galaxies. Each and every thing that had been destroyed when the Writer met his end. It was all coming back in a flash.

The entire universe was reforming into existence.

The amazing astrological miracle only faded away when one final planet was rebooted back into existence…

And that was when Simba woke up.

The cub's eyes flickered open. He stared up at the bright blue sky. The sound of birds tweeting invaded his ears. A light afternoon breeze cooled his body.

He was alive.

"Huh?"

Simba sat up, looking around. He was still sat by the tree at the waterhole. Everything looked the same as it did before. In fact, as he turned his head, he noticed that Pride Rock was stood firmly in the distance. There were no signs that it had ever been raised into the air.

Simba stared down at the fresh grass on the ground, coming to the only possible conclusion.

The Pride Lands had been restored.

I survived, he thought, resting his cheek against the tree trunk. It felt exactly the same as when he first met Nala.

Nala…

Simba's heart sank into his stomach as memories came rushing back into his head. He remembered everything. The Writer, the battle, Nala dying… The truth hit him like a boulder to the brain.

Everyone was dead.

"No…" Simba bowed his head, tears welling up in his eyes.

I'm all on my own now… Alone.

"Ow, my head hurts," said a voice.

Simba jerked his head upwards to see who had spoken.

And then he saw them.

Nala, Haiba, Zazu, Sarafina and the Interceptor. Lying on the ground in front of him.

They were alive.

Nala shook her head, slowly waking up from her long sleep. She was the first to notice Simba. "Simba?"

"Nala?" Simba hopped to his paws, heart pounding in his chest, overjoyed.

Simba and Nala slowly approached each other, as if unable to believe that they were both together. It felt like they had been permanently separated…

"Simba?" Nala reached out with a paw, touching his cheek. "Is that really you?"

Simba nodded, smiling. "I'm here, Nala." He allowed a deep sigh of relief to escape his throat. "I thought you were gone for ever."

"I felt the same way," Nala confessed, staring into his eyes. "I felt like I… disappeared. I was so far away… Just what happened?"

"Yeah," said the Interceptor, walking over to Simba. "I think you've got some explaining to do!"

"Interceptor!" Simba threw his forepaws around the hunter, gripping him tightly. "You're alive!"

"Hey—get off me, ya sausage!" He wriggled away from Simba. "I don't have time to get mushy!"

"I'm just glad to see you," Simba said, speaking the truth. Although he never thought he would be happy to see one of his former enemies… Life had a funny way of changing things.

"Hey, Simba."

Haiba wandered over to him, smiling.

"Long time, no see, huh?"

Simba stared at Haiba, speechless for the first time in a long while. The scars had completely vanished from his cheek, leaving him looking handsome and attractive. There were no fatal wounds in his stomach, either. That was what pleased Simba the most. The fact that he was back.

Haiba. His best friend. Alive and well.

All was as it should be.

The two embraced each other. "I'm glad to see you, Haiba," Simba said. "And I'm sorry about everything that I've done to you."

"It's no problem," Haiba said, patting him on the shoulder. "I'm just glad to be back."

"I second that," said Zazu, stood on Sarafina's shoulder as she walked over to them. "Meeting psychopathic gods isn't exactly a pastime of mine."

"Mom!" Nala clung to her mother, burying her head in the fur on Sarafina's chest. "Oh… you're alive." Words couldn't describe her happiness. "I thought I was never going to see you ever again…"

"It's okay, Nala," Sarafina said, placing a paw around her daughter's shoulder. Elated to see her. "I won't be going anywhere for a long time. I promise."

"I'm so glad you're back," Simba said, unable to believe what he was seeing. "I thought you were all goners."

"Yeah…" Nala had a thoughtful expression on her face. "Just what happened, anyway?"

That was the big question. When Simba defeated the Writer, he thought that the world had ceased to exist. That was what the Writer had said, anyway. When he was dying, he could feel himself fading away. Disappearing from existence.

But, as Simba thought about it more and more, the answer suddenly seemed to present itself.

"I defeated the Writer," Simba said, prompting confused looks from his resurrected friends. "I think that when he died, the world stopped existing."

"Then how are we here right now?" Nala asked.

"Well, there must be only one reason," Simba replied. "We're real."

"What?" Haiba exclaimed. "But I thought we were just characters!"

"He must have died before I did," Simba mused. "So I was the only real animal left. The world must have restored itself because he died first. He can't control us anymore. He can't control *anything*. We're free."

"Then that means that… that we're not stuck in the same year," Nala concluded. "We can start growing up."

"Yeah," Simba agreed. "Might take us a couple of years, though—I think we're just middle-aged cubs again."

"But how did we all come back to life?" Haiba wondered. "I thought we were as dead as… well, someone dead."

"We must have been at the heart of it all," Simba said. "So we survived."

"No complaints from me," the Interceptor said, folding his forepaws.

"So now what do we do?" Sarafina asked, looking around the waterhole. She could see birds flying gracefully through the air for the first time in months. "The Pride Lands are back. We have a home again."

Simba glanced at Nala. "I think it's about time that we faced up to our responsibilities," he said.

Now that he had his home back, Simba knew what he had to do. It was time to finally move on from his cubhood, and take his rightful place as King of the Pride Lands. That was what his father would have wanted. But he didn't care about that. It was his choice. His decision.

He was going to write his own story from now on.

"Zazu, do you know anything about crowning ceremonies?" he asked.

"Leave it to me, young master," Zazu said, bowing in front of the cub. "I mean, *king*. Young *king*."

"So he gets to be the king and I get *nothing*?" the Interceptor said. "Where's the fairness in that?"

"I never said you couldn't stay," Simba replied. "How about it, Interceptor? Fancy all the wildebeest you can eat?"

The Interceptor grinned at the cub. "*I like it!*"

"We did it," Haiba said, throwing his forepaws around Simba and Nala, pulling them close. "We saved the world!"

"Well, *Simba* saved the world," Nala corrected him.

"Yeah…" Simba looked aside, feeling quite awkward. He wanted to clear something up with her. "Could I speak to you for a second, Nala?"

"Sure," Nala said, as they walked over to the tree where they first met, leaving the others to celebrate. "What is it?"

"I'm… sorry," Simba apologised. "About everything. I've been acting like a royal jerk. It doesn't matter whether the Writer had something to do with it or not. I still hurt you. I, uh… I don't know whether you'd like to…"

"Try again?" Nala suggested, tilting her head up.

"Yeah," Simba said, shrugging his shoulders. "Try again."

He regretted his actions deeply. But he knew that he had the capacity to change, now that the Writer was gone. He could try to set things right again.

Nala glanced at the tree, smiled, and then nuzzled him on the cheek. "Yeah. We can try again. I think we belong together, you and me."

"Yeah," Simba said, a hopeful feeling rising in his stomach. "That's just what I was thinking."

Maybe things could work out between them after all.

The two cubs joined the others, hopeful that they would be moving on into a brighter future from now on.

"What can I say?" Simba gestured to them all with his forepaws. "We have the greatest family in the world."

"I agree," Haiba said. "There are so many of you I have crushes on. Especially Sarafina."

"Sorry, Haiba," Sarafina said, glancing up at Zazu. "But someone's already stolen my heart…"

The hornbill managed a limp smile in response. But he wouldn't say anything.

"Ah, well," Haiba said. "There are always other animals. Or sticks."

Nala chuckled, staring up at Simba. "So, do you think things are going to be okay from now on, Simba?"

"Nope," Simba replied. His auburn eyes twinkled at her. "I think they're going to be *perfect*."

And no one could argue with that.

Three Years Later…

"Simba!"

Queen Nala emerged from the den, looking out for her mate. She was a fully grown lioness now, having ruled over the kingdom with King Simba for the past three years. In fact, she was the youngest queen in the history of the Pride Lands.

"Simba! Where are you?" she called, her gaze shifting to the edge of Pride Rock. You would never know that it was once used as a weapon by an evil god… "Oh. *There* you are."

King Simba turned from the edge of Pride Rock, grinning at his mate. His long red mane swayed in the light evening breeze. "What is it, Nala?"

"I was just making sure that you didn't wander off again," Nala said, joining her mate by his side. "I know how you like running off to the jungle. That thirst for adventure never really went away, did it?"

"I haven't disappeared in days," Simba assured her. "Haiba will tell you. I was with him the whole time."

"Yep," Haiba said, suddenly emerging from behind a boulder. He had a light brown mane now, dropping down to his shoulders. An adult. And still very handsome. Thankfully, there was no indication that he had ever once been cursed with permanent scars… "I was with Simba all day. Even when we went to the jungle— I mean, waterhole. Yeah. That's what I meant."

Nala shot him a disapproving glare. "I *knew* it," she said.

"All right, I'm sorry," Simba said. "I couldn't help myself."

"Those days are over, Simba," Nala said. "You won't find any more Hagos or Shockers lurking around the place. That's all in the past."

"You can't change the past," Haiba muttered, striding over to the tip of Pride Rock. He stared out at the massive kingdom, which was thriving with life once more. For the first time since the Pride Lands had been destroyed by the Vimelea. "You really outdid yourselves with the place, guys. I never thought we'd get this far in three years."

"It's just like it used to be," Simba said, smiling at their kingdom. "Back when we were just cubs."

"Speaking of childish cubs," Nala said, "have you seen my mother anywhere?"

"I saw her on the way back in," Haiba told her. "She's still hanging around with Zazu. I can't say I'm against the idea of marrying a hornbill, actually. It sort of works."

Sarafina was now married to Zazu. The lioness finally admitted that she had quite an attraction to the hornbill, and they were now in a very happy relationship together. Nala couldn't exactly complain. Things could have been a lot worse. Like both Sarafina and Zazu being dead, for example… She didn't want that. She still suffered nightmares of that horrible night all those years ago. The night where she had lost everything. But, like Haiba said, she couldn't change the past.

"She's just like us two when we were cubs," Nala said, looking up at Simba. "I suppose that's a good thing, though. If it makes her feel younger, then that's fine by me."

"Well, Zazu organised *our* wedding ceremony," Simba said. "It's only fair that we did his."

"He did my mother's, too," Haiba said. "Luckily, there were no explosions from Wazimu this time. I know how he likes his experiments. Thank goodness we gave them that large cave to stay in. I don't think Pride Rock would still be standing

otherwise."

"Looks like everyone's got someone," Nala observed.

"I wish someone would marry *me*," Haiba grumbled. "Those two cute plants don't speak to me anymore. Maybe I should try my chances with the Interceptor."

"Where *is* the Interceptor?" Simba wondered, looking around.

"Hunting," Haiba said. "*Again*. You know how he feels about killing wildebeest. He *likes* it!"

Simba, Nala and Haiba all chuckled.

It was quite clear that, despite their age, the three of them hadn't changed much. Nothing was ever going to do that. Deep down, they were still the same adventurous cubs that they had always been. After what they had been through together—after all their adventures over the years—they still remained great friends. A family.

The best family in the world.

They thought of Tama, Tojo, Mufasa and Sarabi every day. All of their friends and family who had died. It was sad. Heartbreaking, even. But they knew that they had to keep their legacy going. And amongst all the loss—despite the deaths of so many loved ones—they knew that it was possibly to carry on.

Into a better future.

"So…" Haiba smiled at them. "We're happy, then?"

"Not just that," Nala said, nuzzling Simba's cheek. "We're *perfect*."

Simba gazed into Nala's eyes. The eyes that he had fell in love with. So many years ago.

Nala stared back. Their souls intertwined.

"Yeah," Simba said. "That's what I thought."

Simba, Nala and Haiba watched over the reborn kingdom, safe in the knowledge that no harm would come to it ever again. This was their home, and this was where they were staying. Their enemies were dead. So were some of their friends. Loneliness and misery had plagued them for all of their lives.

But they always had each other.

Simba, Nala and Haiba.

The three cubs who took on the world.

For ever.

That was the most important thing of all.

And, as Simba, Nala and Haiba stood in the glorious light of the setting sun, they were finally at peace.

The End

AN: There you have it. Simba, Nala and Haiba live happily ever after. Surprised? Well, not me. Not really. I always wanted it to end on a high note. I just never expected it to take so long to get to this point.

You know, when I started this series, I never thought I would get this far. My initial idea was to have thirteen stories. No joke. Thirteen stories and that was it. But as time passed—and my writing skills grew—I came to realise that I loved doing this. I absolutely loved it. More than anything else, in fact. Writing is my favourite pastime, after all.

I didn't know that right from the start, though. It took me quite a while to realise that writing stories is probably what I'm best at. Before this, I didn't know what the hell I wanted to do with my life. As a kid, I wanted to be an actor, a plumber, an ice cream man… but that just didn't seem right to me. It wasn't until I started writing these stories that I discovered what I wanted to do with my life.

I wanted to become an author.

Seriously. Because of this, I want to go out there and write books. I want to entertain people with my work. There's nothing more rewarding to me than reading a review where someone has laughed, or cried, or smiled. Whatever. It makes me happy to know that people are entertained. I'd love to take that further. To get some books published would be a dream come true, if I'm honest. I wouldn't want to do anything else.

It comes as a surprise to me, actually, how far I've come. Sixty-five stories. Over 750,000 words. And coming from someone who's not really the biggest fan of *The Lion King*, that's incredible. I mean, this Disney film means very little to me when compared to others. I think there are so many better ones out there. I haven't even seen it since Christmas 2011. But, for whatever reason, I chose to write a series based on it. I don't know why. Really. It just sort of happened. I fell into it by accident. And I haven't stopped ever since. So, I respect the film greatly for how it's helped me.

Doing this has done so much. It's helped me with my writing skills, it's made me decide where I want to go in life, and it's just made me feel like a better person. It's so therapeutic for me. Oh, and it brought about the creation of Haiba. We can't forget that. Truly one of my greatest characters. I've never seen a fan fiction character who was that loved before. I'm proud of his success. It's so odd, since all I'm doing is writing a cartoon. It's just what I enjoy doing. And people love it, which is great.

One other thing I'd like to say is: thank you. To who? Well, *everyone.* Every single person who wrote reviews, or sent me messages, and all 111 people who put me on their favourite authors list. I love you all. Now, don't take that too seriously. Calm down. I'm not going Haiba on you.

I'd like to particularly thank Daniel (kora22), Greg (Greg M 94) and Eoin (emerald dreamer96) for keeping me happy and entertained on the forum. It's been a lot of fun discussing Haiba and writing scripts where he sells himself. And all the death threats. I can't get enough of knowing how you will all kill me. Thank you to everyone who drew fan art of my stories, too. It's great! Always a pleasure to see it.

Oh, and thanks to Haradion also, for all those messages and ideas that we used to share with each other. (You stopped messaging me, though. I knew I was too pathetic for you.)

Seriously, though, thank you. For everything. I never would have made it through all sixty-five of these stories without your kind words and support. It means the absolute world to me. You have no idea how much this has helped. It's been one of the best experiences of my life. I'm going to remember the adventures of Simba, Nala and Haiba for a long time to come.

Now, you might be wondering what's next for me. Well, first of all, I will not be leaving the site. I'll make that clear now. I will still be active on *The Lion King Adventures Forum*, and the account will always be open if anyone wants to message me. The stories will remain here, if anyone should wish to read them again. I'm going to continue with writing my own books and trying to get them published, while also writing some short stories on the sister site, FictionPress. That account is still going to be ThatPersonYouMightKnow, by the way. I won't be changing my pen name. So, if you want to see more stories from me, then head over there. Oh, and if I *do* get one of my books published, then I will be sure to tell you.

And there you have it. *The Lion King Adventures* is finally over and done with. Please leave one final review. I would be more than delighted to hear what you think about the ending, or the series, or just me in general. It would mean a lot to hear one final goodbye from you all. I don't know what you'll say, but I'm sure I'll love it, nonetheless. Your opinions matter to me more than anything.

That's it from me. All I can say now is goodbye, and thank you so much for reading *The Lion King Adventures*.

Take care,

—ThatPersonYouMightKnow

Looks like you're done now. Go outside and play.